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AS TO

POLITICS

SECOND EDITION

A DISCUSSION UPON THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL ACTION AND OF CLASS-CONSCIOUS ECONOMIC ACTION AND THE URGENT NECESSITY OF BOTH

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY
45 ROSE ST. NEW YORK
1915

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DANIEL DE LEON.

AS TO POLITICS

A Discussion Upon the Relative Importance Of Political Action and of Class-Conscious Economic Action, and the Urgent Necessity of Both

SECOND EDITION

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"The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people, and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

"Between these two classes a struggle must go on until all the toilers come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field, and take and hold that which they produce by their labor through an economic organization of the working class, without affiliation with any political party."—Preamble of the I. W. W.

National Executive Committee,
Socialist Labor Party,
45 Rose Street, New York
1915

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"The Trades Union should never be connected with, nor made dependent upon a political party, if the former is to fulfill its task. The moment that is done, the death-blow is dealt to it. The Trades Union is the school for Socialism. In the Trades Union the workingmen are trained into Socialists, because there the struggle with capital is daily carried on under their very eyes. All political parties, whatever their complexion may be, and without exception, warm up the working class only for a season, transitorily. The Trades Union, on the contrary, captures the mass of the workingmen permanently. ONLY THE TRADES UNION IS CAPABLE OF SETTING ON FOOT A TRUE POLITICAL PARTY OF LABOR, AND THUS RAISE A BULWARK AGAINST THE POWER OF CAPITAL."—Karl Marx.

INTRODUCTION

The contents of this pamphlet is a discussion that took place in the columns of The People, under the head "As to Politics," during the months of November and December, 1906, and January and February, 1907.

The discussion consisted in letters written to The People by correspondents who advocated the dropping of political action altogether, and reliance exclusively upon revolutionary, class-conscious Industrial Unionism; and The People's answers. The letters are published in this pamphlet together with the answers given to each by The People, combating the error. An important part of the discussion consisted in a number of questions asked and answers to them by The People. These are also included, closing with an editorial from The People entitled "Supplemental" to the subject, and answering the last question put.

The subject-matter of the discussion, besides being of deep interest, is timely. True to the Marxian observation that, contrary to the law of bourgeois revolutions, the law, obedient to which the revolutionary movement of the proletariat acts, is to "criticize itself constantly; constantly to interrupt itself in its own course; to come back to what seems to have been accomplished, in order to start over anew; to scorn with cruel thoroughness the half measures, weaknesses and meannesses of its first attempts; to seem to throw down its adversary only in order to enable him to draw fresh strength from the earth, and again to rise up against it in more gigantic stature; to constantly recoil in fear before the undefined monster magnitude of its own objects—until, finally, that situation is created which renders all retreat impossible, until the conditions themselves cry out:

"Hic Rhodus, hic salta!"—true to that Marxian observation, the Labor Movement of America is to-day thoroughly criticizing itself. No more important subject of criticism can there be than half-measures—one time purely of physical force, another time purely of political action—which the movement has, in previous years, pursued. No more important a subject to be clear upon than the proper tactics of the movement. Means and ends supplement, they even dovetail into each other. No clearness, as to ends, is well conceivable without correctness of means; no correctness of means can well be hit upon without clearness as to ends. This principle is peculiarly applicable to the ends and the means thereto of the Socialist or Labor Movement.

The publication, in pamphlet form, of the discussion conducted during those four months in The People is intended to furnish in compact form the information whereby to arrive at the correct tactics wherewith to reach the goal of the Socialist Commonwealth.

DANIEL DE LEON.

New York, July 8, 1907.

FIRST LETTER
By JOHN SANDGREN
San Francisco, Cal.

The most important issue confronting the working class to-day is the question of the proper method, the proper tactics, to adopt in order to attain the aim upon which even the most hostile factions agree, namely the overthrow of the capitalist system. A discussion of this kind leads us immediately to the question: shall it be accomplished through political organization, or through economic organization, or through both. It is imperative that this question should be openly, honestly, and widely discussed, in order to arrive at a solid basis upon which all workingmen may unite; it is imperative that the cloudiness and uncertainty which now divides revolutionary workingmen and frustrates in part their best energies and efforts, should be dispelled. Having very decided opinions on the subject, I beg leave to submit my views, hoping they will be received in the same good faith as they are given, without prejudice or rancor, solely with the aim of benefitting the working class movement.

The first preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World says that "the workers must come together on the political, as well as the industrial field and take and hold that which they produce by their labor through an economic organization without affiliation with any political party." The second convention of the I. W. W., held this year, adopted an amendment to this clause to the effect that the I. W. W. does not wish to endorse or to be endorsed by any political party, which amendment will no doubt be adopted by referendum vote. The amendment does not materially change the original clause. This clause declaring for political unity, but at the same time striking a nolle-me-tangere, don't-touch-me attitude to all political parties, has been, is, and will be subject to an endless variety of interpretations. A document like the preamble should be positive in its statements, not negative. It should outline a definite, absolutely definite, policy, which could leave no room for essential disagreement, between those who endorse its program at least. Its weakness on this point lies in enumerating two things out of the thousand and one things which it does not want, namely, it does not want to endorse any political party and it does not want to be endorsed by a political party. Instead of doing this, the preamble ought to state most positively what the I. W. W. *does* want and thus serve as a fixed star to steer by, instead of presenting us with a moving cloud to steer by, on this most essential point, the question of tactics.

However presumptuous it may appear, the writer will undertake to suggest an amendment for the next convention to consider, an

amendment which will remove the apparent contradiction and express the ideas and the conception of revolutionary workingmen, and it would be as follows:

To strike out all reference to politics in the I. W. W. preamble.

In defence of a preamble thus amended, may I be allowed to submit the following reasons.

It is not in order to dodge or to escape a difficult situation with which two I. W. W. conventions have unsuccessfully wrangled, that this amendment is submitted for discussion. It is submitted because *political activity may justly be considered of little or no value* for the overthrow of the capitalist system. If the following arguments in support of such a sweeping statement are defective to the point of making the conclusion wrong, they should be annihilated, in the best interest of the working class.

It is being asserted by the adherents of a revolution at the ballot box, that the working class outnumbers the other class as voters (some enthusiasts say "as 10 to 1"). If this statement is true, it would be theoretically possible to vote capitalism out of existence, provided nearly all workingmen could be made to vote solidly for revolution, and provided the class in power would count their vote, and provided the ruling class would abide by their vote, and provided that an economic organization is in existence to "back up" the vote, if the ruling class does not abide by it. But in the final analysis this contention is based upon the statement that the workers are a *majority of the voters.* The contention stands or falls with the question whether the workers are in a majority at the ballot box or not. Thus far nobody can disagree with me, except those who depend for political success upon the votes of people who do not belong to the working class.

The writer maintains that the working class is *not* in a majority at the ballot box, which he will proceed to prove in the following simple manner, by the aid of statistics.

According to United States statistics, as summed up in the Socialist Almanac, page 101, the working class was in 1870, 62.81 per cent. of the population, in 1880, 58.91 per cent., and in 1890, 55 per cent. of the total population. Later statistics I can unfortunately not quote, my little library having been destroyed in the great San Francisco fire. But I am certain that later statistical figures are not such as to wreck my conclusions, as we will find further on.

Taking the figure of 1890 the wage working class is 55 per cent. of the population and the plutocrat, middle, and professional class 45 per cent. Assuming that we have universal and equal manhood suffrage it would then be correct to assume that the working class controls 55 per cent. of the votes and the master class 45 per cent.

But these 55 per cent. are by no means all voters. In this percentage of workingmen are included men of foreign parentage who have not become voters and the disfranchised negroes, and many other non-voters.

Considering first the foreign-born, included in the 55 per cent., we find that in 1900, according to my best recollection they were about 18 per cent. of the whole population. Of these approximately 12 per cent. may be counted as belonging to the working class, and the other 6 per cent. to the other class, these 6 per cent. being nearly all citizens and voters. Of the 12 per cent. belonging to the working class only a small part are voters. A large percentage are not in the country a sufficient time to be citizens, and outside the Celtic and Teutonic races comparatively few foreigners acquire citizenship, partly because they do not learn the language well enough to become citizens, partly because their imperfect knowledge of the language makes them indifferent to citizenship "privileges," partly on account of the difficulty in securing witnesses in accordance with law, partly because they have lost faith in the ballot in the country where they came from. Taking all these factors into consideration it is safe to assume that of the 12 per cent. counted with the working class about 8 per cent. have no vote.

Subtract 8 from 55 you have 47 per cent., as against the 45 per cent. of the other class. Your majority is dwindling dangerously already.

Now we come to the negroes included in the 55 per cent. They number about 10 per cent. of the population. Most negroes being wage workers about 7 per cent. of them are included in the 55 per cent. Of these approximately 5 per cent. are disfranchised directly.

Subtract 5 per cent. from 47 per cent. and you have 42 per cent. as against the 45 per cent. of the other class. Now where is your majority? You are already in the minority, and I have already proven my statement that you do not outnumber the other class at the ballot box.

But in addition to these large groups who have no voice in the nation's affairs we have an immense number of citizens, who are counted in the 55 per cent., who lose their vote through poll tax, property, and residence qualifications and through the nature of their occupation. About 200,000 seafaring men can not vote. Hundreds of thousands of workers, aye over a million, who work in railroad construction, in the woods, or drift from Manitoba to Louisiana with the harvest season, or between the different crops in California and the Northwest, or from mining camp to mining camp or from one industrial town to another, are disfranchised. It is safe to deduct 5 per cent. more from the 55 per cent. Deducting 5 per cent. from 42 per cent. we get 37 per cent. as opposed to the 45 per cent. of the other class. You are now 8 per cent. behind, which leaves a generous margin to cover any errors made in this argument. That the figures will not stand essentially different in 1910 or 1920, counting by per cent., is also safe to assume. It may be said with some truth that since 1890 the working class has been largely swelled by accessions from a dying middle class, and

that nearly a million wage workers (largely disfranchised) come to this country every year, and that the working class as a consequence is now more than 55 per cent. of the population. But as stated above the figures were for 1870, 62.81 per cent., for 1880, 58.91 per cent., for 1890, 55 per cent. If the pendulum has swung the other way since 1890, it is still hardly probable that it has swung far enough to give the working class a majority at the ballot box. It is up to my critics to prove that it has, by quoting later, authentic statistics.

It is proven, then, that the working class does not outnumber the ruling class at the ballot box. And a miss in politics is as good as a mile. To fall short 100 voters of a majority is, for all practical purposes, as bad as getting only 100 votes in all.

But this argument against the value of the ballot as a working class weapon is so strong that I can afford to be generous. I will grant, for the sake of argument that we do outnumber the ruling class at the ballot box.

Can we, then, judging by past and present success, entertain the hope of gathering, in any reasonable time, that problematical working class majority upon one program, under one revolutionary banner? Probably not. The ruling class holds the strings of the bread and butter of millions of slaves so tightly that they can not vote for revolution. Furthermore the ruling class controls the schools and poisons the young minds of the children. It owns the press and controls the minds of the fullgrown. It controls the pulpit, and there pollutes the mind of child and man. What becomes of your working class majority before these facts?

Again, granting for the sake of argument, that we now outnumber the master class at the ballot box, is there any reasonable justification for hoping that the master class will cease to impose new restrictions upon the right to vote, when that has been their course for the last ten years, as witness Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia and other states? Or is there any guarantee whatsoever that our ruling class will not resort to gerrymandering or election geometry, that is, redistributing of districts and representation as has been done in Germany, Sweden and other countries, in order to curtail the effect of a working class vote?

Granting, again, that we not only outnumber the ruling class, but have actually succeeded in getting a majority vote, what hope is there that they will not count us out, as is being done in every election, not only against workingmen's parties but between the masters themselves? What would it matter if we had the vote "backed up with an economic organization"? As long as we insist on accomplishing our aim "legally," so long can the master endure the game of showing us black on white that we are in the minority, and if we were to attempt the "backing up" of this minority, we

would be "illegal" in the eyes of the ruling class anyhow, as long as they are in power.

Having granted so many impossible things, for the sake of argument, let us grant one more. Let us assume that a revolutionary political party carries a national election, and is allowed to take possession of all offices from President down. What will be the result?

As has so frequently been demonstrated, that day of our political victory would be our political funeral. The function of government is to make and enforce laws for the running of the capitalist system and to safeguard it against all comers. Or in other words, the sole purpose and function of government is to regulate the relations springing from the private ownership of the means of production and distribution, and everything connected therewith. But the new form of society, which we are preparing for, does not recognize this private ownership, it proposes to recognize production and distribution on collective lines, a function which cannot possibly be filled by politicians, by a President, a Secretary of War, a Secretary of the Navy, a House of Representatives, a Senate, a Custom House Department, an Internal Revenue Department, etc. Like Shakespeare's Moor, the politicians would find their occupation gone. There would be positively nothing for them to do, unless they were to continue to run society on capitalist lines, the very thing they were supposedly elected to discontinue. Neither can it reasonably be suggested that these men, thus elected, should instantly sit down and reorganize society on co-operative lines. Society may be *reformed* by decrees and resolutions, but a *complete organic change,* a revolution, as we contemplate, must begin at the bottom, is a matter of evolution within the constituent parts of the organism itself, is a building of cell upon cell until the organism is completed. The so-called political organization does not occupy itself with this task. This task is left to the economic organization such as the I. W. W. which is even now grouping and arranging the individual human units as cells in the future organism of society. Such an organization as the I. W. W. will, when the proper time comes, pass society over from private to collective ownership with no more jar, than when a railroad train, after crossing a steel bridge, glides over the narrow slit which separates the bridge from terra firma, no matter what its struggle may be before it reaches that point. And such an organization, instead of having to abdicate on the day of victory, reaches first then its perfection, and becomes the permanent form of the new society. Of course I realize that little, if any, objection will be made to this manner of stating the function of the economic organization. The objection I anticipate is that we need the political movement as an auxiliary at least, in the every day battle with the master class. Against this objection I maintain, and will try to prove, that the political propaganda far from being needed as

an auxiliary for the overthrow of capitalism, is positively harmful to true working class interests. Such propaganda fosters and maintains the illusion that all the evils of society can be mended at the ballot box, which I have shown not to be the case. *Reforms* can be enacted through the ballot, but not revolutions contrary to the interests of those who control the ballot. Political activity puts us on a par with the capitalist parties and places us in a position where we have to tacitly endorse and co-operate in maintaining the capitalist system. I will illustrate.

Suppose Jackson of the S. L. P. had been elected governor of New York, Haywood of the S. P. governor of Colorado, or Lewis of the S. P. governor of California, and all three suppositions are unreasonable, for the capitalist class is not going to allow us to play at governing, simply for the pleasure of having us demonstrate our impotency.

What would happen if these three men had been elected together with their whole tickets, controlling state legislature and everything else?

Could they have declared the co-operative commonwealth in existence? Everybody answers no. The legislature would have to sit down and tackle the bitter tasks of making, amending and improving the laws pertaining to the private ownership of the means of production and distribution. To do anything else would bring upon them the U. S. Supreme Court and eventually the U. S. regular troops. They would perforce have to be accomplices of the capitalist class in administering capitalist law to the workers. Could they even shorten the hours of toil or increase the pay of the workers? Experience tells us no. Ten hour laws have been declared unconstitutional in the State of New York. An eight-hour law was passed by a referendum by the people of Colorado, but it never was taken up by the legislature, so it never had a chance to be declared unconstitutional, but nobody doubts that it would have been so declared had the legislature passed it. Even a local victory would thus be futile. Oh, but you will say, we could keep the militia off in case of strike. Yes, but could you keep the federal troops off? No, we could not.

In the meantime the Western Federation of Miners and many unions of the American Federation of Labor even have an eight-hour day and a minimum wage. Have they been declared unconstitutional? No, and they did not gain it through political action, but through economic organization.

The advocates of political working class activity predicate their success upon being "backed up" by an economic organization which is to take the chestnuts out of the fire for them. The economic organization stands on its own legs and declines political "assistance." The economic organization makes just such demands as it is able to enforce, and it is able to make demands and to enforce them from the very first, it does not have to wait for that hazy

day when we shall have a majority. For them to waste their energy on the building up and maintaining of a political organization, which they afterwards would have to "back up," only to awaken to a realization of its impotency, would be like crossing the river to fill your waterbucket, when you can just as well get your water on this side.

One more objection I will anticipate and meet. It will be said perhaps: "The workers have the right to vote, and, if we do not give them a chance to vote for revolution, they have no choice but to vote for capitalism." But this objection has only a sentimental value. Some workingmen may feel some satisfaction in teasing the bear with a vote for revolution. I, for one, do not any longer. I do not enjoy practical jokes, and still less do I enjoy being insulted by having my ballot counted out. I wish to see my fellow workers quit wasting their time and energy on an illusion, drop politics, and unite on a plan of action which will bring about the results we desire, and that plan of action I find expressed in an economic organization on the lines of the I. W. W.

You will then, finally, ask: "What are we going to do with the political working class organizations already in existence, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Socialist Party?" The question is simple and easily answered. Both these organizations maintain that there is war between the two classes. In the war both of them have rendered splendid service, especially the S. L. P., in educating the workers up to the point where they were able to see the necessity of, and to form an economic organization like the I. W. W. They have done well as propaganda societies, but that is all they have ever been, their names and platforms notwithstanding. That they should have originally chosen the political field was natural, due to the deep rooted idea that all social evils can be cured at the ballot, in a "free" country. But their role is now played. In war, success depends often upon a complete change of front, upon a swift flank movement, upon abandoning one position and taking up a new one. Such movements are often necessary to avoid exposing your own men to your own fire. Such is the position of the S. P. and the S. L. P. now. They are right in the line of fire. Their war cries are confusing and demoralizing the gathering proletarian army and may cause a temporary reverse. What kind of organization is theirs for war purposes! It is a machine, a general staff, composed of sections, of locals, calling on their army (and an unreliable army it is) every two or four years for parade and review at the ballot box and then dismissing it. What sensible man could any longer participate in that sort of stage war? It is up to you to break up camp and take up the struggle from a point of vantage in the I. W. W. and get out of the line of fire. Turn over your funds and your institutions at the earliest possible date to the I. W. W. and let us join in the drilling and perfecting of the revolutionary industrial army which is never dismissed, but fights

and forges forward irresistibly to the goal, the overthrow of capitalism and the establishing of the new society.

Before closing allow me again to request that my arguments be considered exclusively on their merits, and that every critic give as much time and sincere thought to the subject as I have.

ANSWER.

[Sandgren's article falls within the general province of the burning question of Unionism, with a special eye to political activity, as its title indicates. The writer plants himself upon the industrial form of organization, or the I. W. W., as essential to the emancipation of the working class, and proceeds to present a chain of reasoning from which he concludes that the political movement is worthless, harmful and should be discarded, and he calls upon the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party to "break up camp," and to "turn over their funds and institutions" to the I. W. W. Finally, the writer makes an earnest appeal for the serious consideration of his arguments, and invites discussion thereupon.

The writer's premises are in the main wrong, and his conclusion is not only wronger, but not even logical, his own premises being defective. Nevertheless, the article is timely. Due to its timeliness, seeing that a perceptible anti-political sentiment has latterly broken out in several quarters, the article is published. Moreover, in honor to the good spirit which prompts the article, and for the purpose of systematizing the discussion which it invites and preventing the same from degenerating, as such discussions unfortunately but too frequently do, into an indefinite rambling that wanders more or less from the conclusion or the premises under consideration, the article will here be divided into its two main component parts, and these dissected.

I.

WORKING CLASS STRENGTH AT THE BALLOT BOX.

After the first four introductory pages which can be safely left undiscussed, whether pro or con, the writer devotes much space to prove statistically that the working class does not outnumber the capitalist class at the polls, and hence the workingman's ballot can never win. The figures are wrong. For one thing, part of them are nearly twenty years old; for another, the deductions are made only from the figures for the working class, whereas many a deduction should also be made from the figures for the voting strength of the capitalist class. Here are, for instance, a few serious discrepancies between the writer's figures and the figures of the Census for 1900:

The writer estimates the foreign born population in 1900 at 18 per cent.; the census states 23.7. The writer estimates the number of citizens among the foreign born at considerably below 10 per cent. (6 per cent. as capitalists and all voters, and of the remaining 12 per cent., workingmen, he says, "only a small part are voters"); the census for 1900 gives 80 per cent. of foreign born males as citizens, and only 20 per cent. of them as remaining aliens. The writer climaxes his errors under this head by subtracting his deductions, not from the working class population in 1900 (about 70 per cent.), but from the working class population in 1890 (about 55 per cent.).

Again, the writer deducts in lump from the voting strength of the working class "about 200,000 seafaring men" as unable to vote; the census for 1900 gives less than one-half that number, only 78,406 as the total for "boatmen and sailors," exclusive of U. S. sailors and marines who are comparatively few, seeing that, together with the soldiers, they number only 43,235 men.

Again, the writer overshoots his own mark. He points to the influence, physical and mental, that the ruling class exercises through "the strings of the bread and butter of millions of slaves" which that class "holds tightly," as well as through its schools, press and pulpit, and concludes therefrom that these slaves "cannot vote for revolution." If these influences, which no doubt must be reckoned with, are so absolutely controlling that these wage slaves will be too timid to perform even such a task as voting, a task that the veriest coward could perform with safety, and they must be deducted in lump from the voting strength of the working class, upon what ground can the writer feel justified to enroll those same slaves as reliable material for the revolutionary act of the I. W. W.? If they must be excluded from the former, they cannot for a moment be thought of in the latter.

No doubt deductions must be made from the voting strength of the working class; but the necessary deductions are not the slashing ones made by the writer. So overwhelming is the numerical preponderance of the working class that, all justifiable deductions notwithstanding, it preserves an ample majority at the polls. Moreover, the revolutionary working class ballot may safely count with re-inforcements from the middle and kindred hard-pushed social layers. While corrupt and vicious is all attempt to secure split votes for the revolution from classes that vote the rest of capitalist tickets, legitimate is the attempt to induce hard-pushed middle class elements to tear themselves from their class prejudices and plump their vote for the revolution—and justified is the expectation that big chunks of that class will hearken the summons.—If the decision for or against politics were to depend exclusively upon the numerical strength of the working class at the polls the decision would have to be for, not against.

II.

THE MISSION OF POLITICS.

The second of the two main component parts of the writer's article is devoted to proving that even if the working class ballot were more numerous than the ballot of the foe, the former would be counted out by the latter; and that, even if it were not counted out, working class political victory would be a Barmicide's Feast, in that the Socialist Republic has no use for the political or modern form of government. Both these points have been enlarged upon and proven in detail in De Leon's address on "The Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World;" they were proved so thoroughly that the pure and simple political Socialists, who felt the cold steel of the argument enter their bourgeois souls, have handled the argument like a hot potato, and confined themselves to vapid slurs about "vagaries," or the more vapid indulgence in "calling names" against the maker of the argument. That argument, however, was made *in support* of the I. W. W. position regarding the necessity of uniting the working class on the "political as well as upon the industrial field;" the writer of the article under discussion, on the contrary, makes the argument *in opposition* to the I. W. W. position. The opposite application of the identical argument brings out the basic error that underlies Sandgren's reasoning—he confuses *political agitation* with the *ballot*. The two are distinct. How completely the vital distinction is missed by those who oppose political action is graphically illustrated by a favorite argument among them, an argument that Sandgren reproduces in beautifully pictorial style when he says that for the working class "to waste their energy on the building up and maintaining of a political organization, which they afterwards have to 'back up,' only to awaken to a realization of its impotence, would be like crossing the river to fill your water-bucket, when you can just as well get your water on this side." This is begging the question. The very point at issue is whether that economic organization, able "to fill the water-bucket," can at all be brought together without the aid of political agitation; the very point at issue is whether the politics-ignoring economic organization has hitherto accomplished anything of lasting value to the working class at large; or to put it in yet a third and summary form, whether the decline of power with the economic organization is not due to its contradictory posture of "voting" for one thing and "striking" for its opposite. Of course, if such a thing is conceivable as the bringing together of an industrial organization, able "to fill the bucket" without the aid of political agitation, it were folly to waste time, energy and funds in building up and maintaining a political organization. But the thought is visionary. To him in whom such a thought can find lodgment the blood spilt in Russia during the

last sixteen months is blood wasted—and the error is born of the confusion of "political agitation" with the "ballot."

The value of the "ballot" as a constructive force is zero; the value of "political agitation" is immeasurable.

Not everything that capitalism has brought about is to be rejected. Such a vandal view would have to smash the giant machine of modern production as well. Among the valuable things that capitalism has introduced is the idea of peaceful methods for settling disputes. In feudal days, when lords fell out, production stopped; war had the floor. The courts of law have become the main fields of capitalist, at least internal capitalist battle, and production continues uninterfered with. It matters not how corrupt the courts have become, or one-sided against the working class. The jewel of civilized or peaceful methods for settling disputes is there, however incrusted with slime. Capitalism, being a step forward as all Socialists recognize, cannot help but be a handmaid, however clumsy, to civilized methods. Of a piece with the court method for the peaceful settlement of disputes, is the political method. The organization that rejects this method and organizes for force only, reads itself out of the pale of civilization, with the practical result that, instead of seizing a weapon furnished by capitalism, it gives capitalism a weapon against itself. The "filling of the bucket" must be done by the million-masses. The agitation for force only clips the wings of the agitation for the "filling of the bucket." The inevitable result is that the agitation has to degenerate into "conspiracy;" conspiracy can be conducted in circumscribed localities only, such localities exclude the masses—and the wheels of time are turned back. *The bringing together of the physical force organization becomes impossible.* Political agitation equips the revolution with a weapon that is indispensable. Political agitation enables the revolution to be preached in the open, and thereby enables the revolution to be brought before the million-masses—*without which there can be no "bucket" fashioned to do the "filling."* In short, political agitation, coupled with the industrial organization able to "take and hold," or "back up" the political movement, or "fill the bucket," places the revolution abreast of civilized and intelligent methods—civilized, because they offer a chance to a peaceful solution; intelligent, because they are not planted upon the visionary plane of imagining that right can ever prevail without the might to enforce it. Of course, "political agitation" implies the setting up of a political ticket, and that, in turn, implies the "ballot." Indeed, the "ballot" may be lost; let it; the fruits, however, of the "political agitation" are imperishable. *Under the shield of that agitation the "bucket" is shaped.* To Father Time the final issue may be safely left. No doubt there are many thorns to the rose of the political movement. No rose is without them. Irrelevant is the enumeration of these thorns. What the adversaries of political

action in the I. W. W. should do in the endeavor to convert their fellow workers of the opposite view is not to indulge in the superfluous repetition regarding the folly of the political movement when the "bucket" is in shape, but how the "bucket" can be put in shape without the aid of the agitation and education which the political movement places in the hands of the revolution.

* * *

The Socialist Party will as little "break up camp," by the argument, however crushingly convincing, of the futility of the "ballot" only, as the capitalist class will break up camp by the argument, however crushingly convincing, that it is doomed. For that the S. P. is too legitimate an offshoot of bourgeois thought, which is clogged with "reform" notions, and for which the pure and simple ballot is a useful weapon. The S. P. will break up camp only when the revolutionary element in its ranks discovers that it is upon their shoulders that such a caricature of Socialism actually rests, and that it is from them only that the caricature draws its strength. The S. P. will "break up camp" only when this revolutionary element, by withdrawing, removes the plug from under the concern. As to the Socialist Labor Party, it never will need to be appealed to "to break up camp" after the "bucket" of the I. W. W., having gathered sufficient solidity, will itself have reflected its own political party. That day the S. L. P. will "break up camp" with a shout of joy—if a body merging into its own ideal can be said to "break up camp."—*Ed. The People.*]

SECOND LETTER

By J. A. LA BILLE

St. Louis, Mo.

I have been much interested in the discussion under the heading of "As to Politics"; so much so that I was sorry to see it stop almost before it started. The article by John Sandgren was very good except in regard to the vote which does not affect the question. All we need to know is that the working class is in the majority. We *do* know they will be counted on the economic field. So I will take a stand in this discussion that working class political action, parliamentary or agitation is not only harmful to the marshalling of the working class but that the industrial organization is all sufficient, hence, I contend the I. W. W. should change its preamble by declaring against political action.

Comrade De Leon says we confuse "political agitation" with the "ballot," so we will analyze "political agitation" and endeavor to determine if its value is "immeasurable"; also if "the bringing together of an industrial organization able 'to fill the bucket' without the aid of political agitation" is impossible. Political action may be summed up as follows: Political organization, business meetings, mass meetings, conventions, propaganda meetings, placing tickets on the ballot, watching at polls, burning midnight oil studying election laws and tricks of the professional politician, spending tremendous sums of money, all of which means a great deal when the organization attains any size of importance. Then Mr. Workingman is in politics so confused and befuddled that he don't know whether he is a workingman or a professional politician. Comrade De Leon is correct when he states: "In feudal days, when the lords fell out, production stopped; war had the floor; the courts of the law have become the main field of capitalist, at least internal capitalist, battles, and production continues uninterfered with." Thus showing the capitalists have good reason to settle their disputes by the courts through politics because they are property owners and needs must have their revenues uninterrupted. The working class, on the other hand, are propertiless, giving them advantage on the economic battlefield, having nothing to lose but their chains. It is there where the struggle must be, and it is there and there only where the working class will reach the heart of capitalism.

Every victory won, every hour of leisure gained, every "supply wagon" captured, will be of unlimited more value to the revolution than the conquering of a piece of paper called the ballot. Then what is political agitation but the urging of the working class to go into politics and when you do that you can't give it any material reason for so doing because the fight of the working class is

economic in character, not political. The economic organization can "back up" the political, but the political cannot back up the economic in this country any more than in Germany or Russia. Those expecting to secure power on the political field will some day find themselves chasing the rainbow which appears very beautiful, but always out of reach. The workingman is not exploited by the political "burg" of capitalism, but through the private ownership of the means of production, hence his malady is not a political disease but economic. His environment in the mills, factories, mines, fields, etc., gives him an economic character out of which it is folly to lure him into a field of battle entirely foreign to his characteristics and environments for no other purpose than agitation. The reason he first took to the "ballot" was from an illusion that all that was, was the result of the ballot. The slave saw his master feed the slaves, hence, he thought the slaves were supported by the master. The workman to-day kisses the hand that pays his wages and believes he is exploited as a consumer because he sees the prices go up. He sees the police, soldiers and the politicians in office come after him with "fixed bayonets," so he thinks his struggle is a political one. He does not know that like Russia the army and police is here to stay until the end of the struggle and the only way to get the best of them is by cutting off their base of supplies.

I further contend the I. W. W. is all sufficient, both as to education and force. Comrade De Leon says: "Of a piece with the court method for the peaceful settlement of disputes is the political method. The organization that rejects this method and organizes for force only, reads itself out of the pale of civilization with the practical result that, instead of seizing a weapon furnished by capitalism, it gives capitalism a weapon against itself." The impression seems to be that the economic organization, the embryo of the coming republic, is physical force only. I take the position that it not only has the force, but all the means of educating the working class necessary, in fact, it is only through the industrial organization that the proletariat can be educated to their true class interests. And if they go into politics the longer they are there the more befuddled they become. If they must have politics let them have it in the I. W. W. as the Socialist Republic, where a vote qualification will be had. "No producer, no voter." The worker does not need political agitation in order to reach the masses, and I believe at this stage of the game the capitalist "committees" will have their hands full suppressing agitation by the industrially organized workers. If it be the case, that agitation will be hampered, and the economic organization cannot protect itself, then how is it to protect both itself and the "fiat of the ballot?" The idea of a "general strike" entailing many hardships on the part of the working class, to defend the ballot, in my opinion is absurd. *We are not fighting for the privilege of registering our votes on capitalist books. We are fighting for bread and butter now and our*

emancipation as soon as we are well enough organized to take charge of the various industries and operate them entirely in the interests of the workers therein. If the worker centralizes his struggle for liberty on the economic field only, then his education need be very simple. Yea; he could travel the path of his class interests almost by instinct, but if he divides his fighting forces, one on the political, one on the economic then his education will require years of study and experience to know which one of the many paths is safe for him to walk over (these remarks apply to the working class as a rule). We must remember also that only a small percentage of *any* organization must shoulder the greater part of the work and when the strength of these valiant workers is divided between two organizations it handicaps the general movement to a great extent.

As I said before, if the working class devotes its efforts to the building up of the industrial organization, the foundation of the future republic, his education need be very simple and along such as (1) Labor is the source of value, therefore should have full product; (2) Capital does not produce value, therefore the capitalist is not entitled to any part of the product and show him how he is exploited and the method to his emancipation as we do to-day except cut out all agitation for politics and show him the fallacy of expecting to derive benefits from political action. It appears to me that the honest workingman who would go into political action for agitation is a pure and simple borer from within as much so as the honest man who votes and agitates in the A. F. of Scabs and S. P. who also works and agitates to educate the rank and file of those organizations. The result, in all three cases, is the same. Will we smash the capitalist institution of politics by boring from within or smashing from without? Let the workers do their voting in the I. W. W., a place the capitalist cannot vote. Let them do their fighting in that army and when the industries have been thoroughly organized let them move the I. W. W. in the capitol building if they so will, and if there be senators and representatives of capitalist hell there, sweep them with the rest of the rubbish into the sewer if necessary and remember it won't require a single workingman in political office from president up to dog catcher to do it, either, for the moment the source of the capitalists' existence is cut off by the industrially organized workers the dome of capitalism will crumble and fall of its own weight. In the meantime let the capitalists have the ballot all to their precious selves. Let them fill their offices with all the rotten eggs in the country, let them make the laws to their hearts' content. Yes, all the laws and fill their political citadels with law books, lawyers and jurists, too. We will rest at ease, knowing their laws and interpretation of laws will be as a bullet without force to propel it, *their politics will be impotent.* It matters not how many laws or what they are, the whole question is in their ability to enforce them and their ability

to enforce them depends not on their political supremacy but on their economic supremacy over the working class. It is the same with the working class whose demands will be limited only by the full product of their toil and their ability to enforce. So with these few suggestions (I could make many more but do not wish to abuse a privilege), I will say in conclusion that it is practically the same for the pioneer to attempt to be an Indian in order to capture their war councils as for the worker to be a politician in order to capture the war councils of the capitalist class; in other words, we want the pig, we will not waste energy following echoes trying to capture the squeal; when we get the pig we've got the squeal, too.

The S. L. P. undoubtedly has done and is doing a great service for the revolution and deserves to be called the "Fighting S. L. P." But its *real great service lies in its economic teachings.*

A little discussion on this subject will be beneficial for the members of the S. L. P. and I. W. W., myself included. We should all study it thoroughly and know the whys and wherefores and avoid taking things for granted.

[The above is published out of excess of courtesy to the side that our correspondent holds with. The columns of The People were held open for a month to the matter and not one contributor to the discussion having sustained the anti-political action position the discussion was closed. Out of courtesy to views different from those of The People the discussion is re-opened to the extent of allowing space to the above.]

ANSWER.

[There may be those who suppose that some slight perfidy is alloyed with our courtesy. Perhaps these are not wholly wrong. The courtesy may be perfidious that allows the great space which our correspondent takes and yet leaves unanswered the only question that is pivotal to the issue—How are the masses to be recruited and organized into capacity to take and hold if the agitation is to be conducted upon lines that wholly reject the peaceful theory of "counting noses?"

It is time wasted to point out the thorns on the political stalk. They are all admitted beforehand. The question is,—Is that stalk all thorns and no rose? Nor do we get any nearer to the truth by incorrect definitions. Our correspondent's definition of what political action embraces is woefully deficient. That is the system of "giving a dog a name and then killing him." The rose on the stalk of "political action" is the posture it enables a man to hold by which he can preach revolution without having to do so underground; in other words, by which he can teach the economics and sociology of the Social Revolution in the open, where the masses can hear, and not in the dark, where but few can meet. The nomination of tickets, together with all the routine that thereby hangs,

is but an incidental—like the making of a motion to which to speak, and without which motion being before the house, speaking degenerates into disorder. Simply to assert that the masses *can* be reached, educated and drilled for the revolution by any other process does not remove the fact that it can not be done; at any rate it does not enlighten those who hold otherwise, and who, having no hobby to serve, but only a goal, the emancipation of the working class, to reach, are ever ready to learn. Assertions teach nobody.

Finally, the just compliment our correspondent pays to the "Fighting S. L. P." should cause him to ponder and overhaul his anti-political-action views. He will have a hard time to explain how it comes about that it is the S. L. P. that has been teaching the real fighting economics, if political action is the worthless thing that he takes it for.

The theory of preaching revolution against the capitalist class only by brandishing the sword, in a country where the suffrage is in vogue, leaves unexplained the phenomenon of the unquestionable hatred that the capitalist press manifests for the S. L. P.—for that political organization that admits its impotence to carry out its program, unless the working class is organized into possession of the national machinery of production, in other words, that is aware of and admits the fact that it is only a shell, but the necessary shell, within which the physical force is to be hatched whereby to enforce the demands peacefully made by the ballot. The capitalist class of the land dotes upon pure and simple political Socialism (the hollow shell, without the substance); it likewise dotes upon pure and simple, or non-political Unionism (the amorphic substance, amorphic because shell-less within which the mass can grow and gather shape.) For that combination that combines both shell and substance—for that combination the capitalist class, together with its pickets of all grades, has only the hatred which it manifests upon the slightest provocation for the S. L. P., and for the I. W. W. with its political clause.—*Ed. The People.*]

THIRD LETTER

By JOS. WAGNER and LEON VASILIO

Springfield, Ill.

It is with doubt as to being allowed space in the columns of The People that the undersigned take the decision to express their opinion in regard to Comrade Sandgren's article. We realize the degree of annoyance that we are causing the editor by our action; and were it not for the fact that we have seen in The People so many reflexions cast at the privately owned press of the S. P. in regard to refusals to publish whatever is not to their heart, we would, most assuredly, try to kill our temptation to give out what is our honest and sincere conviction.

We know that our opinion is that of thousands of members of the Industrial Workers of the World, and consequently ask for the same privilege that we both have been granted in the past, when our views were not at variance with the attitude of The People.

After both reading and rereading carefully Sandgren's article, and the answer of the editor of The People; after giving the matter earnest consideration from all view points for the last three weeks, we arrived at the conclusion that, of all the answers that Comrade De Leon has made in his life in capacity of editor of The People, the one just mentioned must be the poorest and the weakest one. Not that he is no more the same brilliant writer, but that the time has come when he is in the wrong, defending a wrong cause. Why and how is this thus? We shall see.

In order to be better understood, we would like to refer the reader to the two articles in question, which are published in the Weekly People of December 1, 1906, under the title "As to Politics." But as every one who will happen to lay hands on this number may not be in position to get that one, we shall give here the quintessence of Sandgren's article.

His contention is that the political activity is useless and harmful, and that the emancipation of the working class can be accomplished through economic revolutionary organization only.

In the first part of the article, which in our opinion is a complete failure, Sandgren endeavors to prove that the working class are not in the majority at the ballot box. Unless Sandgren wanted to be altogether "original" we cannot understand how a man of his calibre could have ventured such an absurdity. This we consider a waste of time to take up for discussion.

In the second part of the article, he admirably shows the impotence of a political organization, and also how fitted an economic organization is to bear the struggle. "Ten hour laws have been declared unconstitutional in the State of New York. . . In the

meantime the Western Federation of Miners and many unions of the A. F. of L., even, have an eight-hour day and a minimum wage. Have they been declared unconstitutional? No, and they did not gain it through political action, but through economic organization. The advocates of political working class activity predicate their success upon being 'backed up' by an economic organization which is to rake the chestnuts out of the fire for them. The economic organization stands on its own legs and declines political 'assistance.'

"The economic organization makes just such demands as it is able to enforce, and it is able to make demands and enforce them from the very first; it does not have to wait for the hazy day when we shall have a majority."

And now comes De Leon's answer. He says that "the basic error that underlies Sandgren's reasoning" is the confusion of the *political agitation with the ballot.*

The two are distinct, says the editor. "How completely the vital distinction is missed by those who oppose political action is graphically illustrated by a favorite argument among them, an argument that Sandgren reproduces in beautifully pictorial style, when he says that for the working class to waste their time on the building up and maintaining of a political organization which they afterwards have to 'back up' only to awaken to a realization of its impotence, would be like crossing the river to fill your water-bucket when you can just as well get your water on this side."

First of all Comrade Sandgren—as well as all of us, industrial workers, who dropped ballot box activity—gives the Socialist political agitation its due credit when it says: "Both these organizations (the S. P. and the S. L. P.) maintain that there is a war between the two classes. In the war both of them have rendered splendid service. . . They have done well as propaganda societies, but that is all they have ever been, their names and platforms notwithstanding. . . Their role is now played."

This means that Sandgren does not confuse political agitation with the ballot; he only rejects the ballot, which, as a constructive force, even in the opinion of the editor is zero. In order to make this point clear, let us analyze the nature of a Socialist political party activity. In the first place it is an incessant criticism of the actual system of society based on the private ownership of the means of life, for which it intends to substitute another system, based on the social or collective ownership of those means—the co-operative commonwealth. This is the political nature of it.

On the other hand this Socialist political party activity consists of a laborious propaganda for the attainment of that social system, a propaganda for the class struggle on the political field, which "implies the setting up of a 'ticket,' and that, in turn, implies the 'ballot.'"

But if the ballot, as a constructive force is zero, so must neces-

sarily be all the amount of work spent in getting that ballot, such as holding nomination conventions, caucuses, getting signatures on petitions, watching at the polls, etc., etc. And we know that most of the energy of a Socialist political party is wasted on that zero proposition.

A revolutionary organization of the working class that aims at the overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of the co-operative commonwealth is essentially political in character—and such is the I. W. W., as Comrade De Leon himself ably proved in his Chicago speech on September 12, 1906.

The one who does confuse the political agitation with the ballot is De Leon. On page 32 of the Preamble of the I. W. W., he says: "A part, the better, the constructive part of Socialist economics, translates itself into the industrial organization of the working class; it translates itself into that formation that outlines the mould of the future social system; another part of Socialist economics, however, inevitably translates itself into politics." Should he not confuse the political agitation with the ballot, he would never dismantle a revolutionary industrial organization "that outlines the mould of the future society" of its sufficiency to carry on the political agitation of the working class, and give this function to another organization which, as we have seen is spending its energy on a zero proposition—at the working class expense.

The Industrial Workers of the World sufficiently fulfills that role of a political party of Socialism by that, that it aims at the co-operative commonwealth and it teaches the class struggle on the industrial field where every victory is a step towards the social revolution—and doesn't waste the energy of the working class on a zero proposition, on something that not only may be lost, but that is always lost.

So much in regard to confusing the political agitation with the ballot.

Now to "the point at issue." "The very point at issue," the editor says further, "is whether that economic organization, 'able to fill the bucket' can at all be brought together without the political agitation; the very point at issue is whether the politics-ignoring economic organization has hitherto accomplished anything of lasting value for the working class at large; or to put it in a third and summary form, whether the decline of power with the economic organization is not due to its contradictory posture of 'voting' for one thing and 'striking' for its opposite. Of course, if such a thing is conceivable as the bringing together of an industrial organization able 'to fill the bucket' without the aid of political agitation, it were folly to waste time, energy and funds in building up and maintaining a political organization."

Let us ask Comrade De Leon, why is he beating around the bush? What does he mean by politics-ignoring economic organization? Does he mean the Industrial Workers of the World, or

the American Federation of Labor? His allusion to "the decline of power with the economic organization" on account of "its contradictory posture of voting for one thing and striking for its opposite" conveys to our minds the A. F. of L., and not that economic organization "able to fill the water-buckets," the "I. W. W.," which is now under discussion.

And since when is Comrade De Leon willing to admit that the A. F. of L. as an organization, is doing on the economic field the opposite of what its members are doing on the political field? This sounds very familiar to those who have heard the pure and simple political Socialist appeal to the pure and simple craft unionist to vote as he strikes. But let us not indulge any longer in these non-essentials.

The question is "whether that economic organization able to fill the bucket can at all be brought together without the aid of political agitation." Before answering this question, let us consider the nature and the activity of an economic organization, such as the I. W. W.

Like the political party of Socialism, it aims at the overthrowing of the present system: it aims to take possession of the tools of production from the capitalist class and operate them for the benefit of the working class, which will be the whole of society.

But for the attainment of this end, the economic organization fighting the class struggle on the industrial field, it organizes the workers in their various locals, industries and departments in order to make them able to cope with modern capitalism in their everyday fight, and wrest concessions from that class locally, industrially or generally, as the case may be—concessions which, unlike the politician's reforms, are steps towards the revolution, as they put the working class more and more in control of the industries in which they are working.

It is founded on the recognition of the fact of the division of society into two classes, between which a struggle must go on, until all the toilers will come together and take over the means of production. Its aim is revolutionary, its activity *political*. It is revolutionary and political because its aim is to change the foundation of this society from an exchange of commodities to the cooperative commonwealth. In other words it is not like the pure and simple union, which acts as buffer between the opposing forces —the capitalist class and the working class—but it is one of these forces organized.

Such an organization as the I. W. W. is brought about by the modern economic conditions, that is, by the industrial development and the revolutionary propaganda, absolutely independent of any ballot party activity, which has an altogether different function, as we have seen.

In all that preceded we cannot see at all where the role of a ballot organization comes in. In his attempt to answer Comrade

Sandgren, the editor tells us of the "jewel" of "civilized or peaceful methods of settling disputes." If this is the only argument left to defend an organization which wastes our time, energy and funds, then we can rest assured that the industrial organization is the only thing able to fill the bucket or to accomplish the revolution. He might as well tell us about those lovely seances of looking each other in the eyes. They are more to the question.

But it is an irony of fate to hear men telling us of settling disputes. Is that the reason for which we are organizing? We are organizing to struggle, and not to settle disputes, which have never been settled in the interests of the working class.

Nothing could settle disputes better than a powerful organization—able to strike terror in the heart of the capitalist class—would. Confronted with such an organization the capitalist class would either have to submit or bear the consequences.

The methods employed by the revolutionary industrial organization are peaceful and civilized enough for the working class. We are assembling peacefully and in a civilized manner discuss matters of our class interest which we afterwards submit to the capitalist class in form of demands. We cannot understand how Comrade De Leon jumps at the conclusion that the I. W. W. agitation—which he terms "agitation for force only"—has to degenerate into conspiracy, which excludes the masses. The industrial agitation is not and cannot degenerate into a "conspiracy" for the simple reason that it is preached in the open, and thereby enables the revolution to be brought before the million masses. Not only does the industrial organization bring the revolution before the million masses, but it also draws the million masses to its ranks and keeps aloof the hard pushed middle class element, with its lawyers, priests and intellectuals in general—in a word all that is foreign to the working class. It draws all the toilers of all nationalities; citizens and non-citizens; all the disfranchised, all the tramps and "coffee-and-doughnuts-bums," which are able to beat their way from Frisco all the way through the "wild west" to Chicago in order to do their own business.

As far as the "chance to a peaceful solution" goes, we are very little concerned about it. It does not depend on the working class how the last blow will have to be struck. If the capitalists will not be satisfied with a decree to step out, we can rest assured that they will, most likely, get worse.

The events that have taken place in the last sixteen or seventeen months have taught us more than the preceding two decades. They have taught us not only that the political party agitation is useless, but harmful to the industrial organization from the Pacific to the Atlantic. We have seen men eagerly listening to the industrial speaker, accidentally being an S. L. P. man, start to show the "difference" or something of that sort, then the men would turn away with a sneer at "the politician."

That the ballot agitation is harmful to the bringing together of an economic organization able to fill the bucket, is obvious; so obvious is this fact that, at the last convention of the I. W. W. we have witnessed Comrade De Leon make a motion to the effect that no organizer of any political party should be employed as organizer for the Industrial Workers of World. Yes, one year of I. W. W. agitation and experience has brought about great changes in the revolutionary thought in this country.

Men that but a few months ago were feeling as touching an extremely delicate spot when speaking of the non-party affiliation clause of the I. W. W. preamble, are now dropping politics without any reservatio mentalis.

And let us not for a minute fool ourselves and think that this is merely a passing crisis, a temporary manifestation of a few over-heated brains.

No! This let-alone politics tendency that we now are noticing in this country is the American expression of a general tendency of the revolutionary working class the world over. In Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and France and even Germany with its great three-million-strong-paper-party we can see the same thing.

In a lengthy article by our Parisian comrade A. Bruckere, recently published in The People, we can see how the working class of France, tired of political parties, is gathering in a revolutionary organization, "The General Confederation of Labor," after dropping politics altogether and adopting the "direct action." The history of this let-alone-politics tendency in Europe would make a mighty interesting and instructive work, which would considerably help in the understanding of the great change that is going on in the revolutionary thought of the working class of the world.

Before closing we would like to say that, in writing this article, we have not been actuated by any prejudice against any particular man or party; that in speaking against ballot activity we have meant all the Socialist parties of the world.

We have been good, faithful members of Socialist parties in Europe and in America for many years, but our experience as wage slaves has shown us that we have been in the wrong. We expressed our opinion, which we are sure, will not meet with the approval of those who have forgotten nothing and learned nothing by years of bitter experience.

ANSWER.

[The question repeatedly asked of the advocates of physical force only, who have favored us with their contributions, remains unanswered: "How do you expect to recruit and organize your Industrial army if you begin by rejecting the peaceful method of solving the Social Question, to wit, the political method? It is signifi-

cant that none of our opponents has cared to meet this point. They all give that question a wide berth. Instead of covering the only point that is decisive they go into a vast number of subjects that may or may not be so, but have nothing to do with the real point —HOW?

The nearest our above esteemed contributors come to an answer on this particular point is the passage: "The I. W. W. sufficiently fulfills the role of a political party of Socialism by that that it aims at the co-operative commonwealth and teaches the class struggle on the industrial field." This statement is doubly defective.

If to "aim" at a thing is enough, then to "wish" for it should be equally sufficient. Every practical mind knows that wishes and aims, like steam, must be in the boiler of a properly organized machine before results can be obtained. Wishes are good, aims still better. Without the organization to realize them they are—well, so much hot air. The question is how to recruit the elements that will constitute the requisite organization.

The second defect in the passage is still more marked. It is fatal to the contention of the anti-political agitation. Indeed the I. W. W. "teaches the class struggle," and can teach it freely, and freely can proclaim its purpose to "take and hold;" but it can do so only because it plants itself upon the non-Russian, that is, upon the civilized principle of solving social difficulties. The I. W. W. expressly recognizes the necessity of working class unity "on the POLITICAL as well as upon the industrial field." So doing the I. W. W. can preach and teach in the open. Its posture is clear—to organize the economic body that shall be able to reflect its own political party, whereby to give a chance to the peaceful settlement of the present social "unpleasantness," and that shall, withal, have the requisite power to enforce the fiat of its ballot. To say that the I. W. W. can freely teach the class struggle, now that its preamble is so wise and sound, is a substantial denial of the claim put forth by our correspondents that political agitation is worthless. Let the I. W. W. follow our correspondents' views and strike out the political clause, that moment they will find out that the present revolutionary agitation conducted by the I. W. W. will have come to an end. Having placed itself upon the plane which the Russian revolutionists are constrained to agitate on, the I. W. W. will be treated to a dose which it will itself have invited, a dose of Russian governmental terrorism. So far from having contributed to raise the tone of the country, the I. W. W. will have helped the capitalists to drag that tone down to the level from which the Russian revolutionists are now seeking to raise their country.

This disposes of the only remotely relevant argument made by our correspondents. There are, nevertheless, two others that should not be ignored, however irrelevant.

Our correspondents say: "We can not understand how Comrade De Leon jumps at the conclusion that the I. W. W. agitation —which he terms 'agitation for force only'—has to degenerate into

conspiracy." The answer to this is: Either our correspondents claim that De Leon has said that "the present I. W. W. agitation has to degenerate into conspiracy;" if that is their meaning then they will have a hard time to prove that De Leon made any such statement. The I. W. W. is what the I. W. W. is to-day, not what our friends, who sign the letter published above, seek to turn it into. They are not yet so far. If, however, our correspondents merely made a slip in their statement, and what they meant to say is that De Leon holds that by removing the political clause from the preamble of the I. W. W. AND RETAINING THE "TAKE AND HOLD" CLAUSE, then the I. W. W. would have to degenerate into conspiracy—if that was their meaning then they have quoted De Leon correctly. A simple denial of this conclusion does not refute a conclusion drawn from the irrefutable historic experience from which the conclusion flows.

At this point a serious illusion seems to reveal itself as taking possession of the minds of our esteemed contributors. They seem to believe that the preaching of the "industrial" form of organization would be sufficient to drill a revolutionary economic organization. We would like to hasten to dispel the illusion by suggesting to them the following principles.

1. The exclusion of the political clause from the I. W. W., leaving the "take and hold" clause extant, would drive the agitation into the narrow quarters of a conspiracy, with all the evil results thereof.

2. The exclusion of both the political clause and the "take and hold" clause, leaving extant only the "industrial" form of organization, would fatally steer the I. W. W. into the quagmire of the Gompers-Mitchell A. F. of L.

The other of the two irrelevant arguments that should be taken up is the one contained in the passage: "So obvious is this fact [the harmfulness of the ballot agitation] that, at the last convention of the I. W. W., we have witnessed Comrade De Leon make a motion to the effect that no organizer of any political party should be employed as organizer of the I. W. W."—De Leon is correctly quoted there; the purport of his motion is, however, misinterpreted. So far from his motion being an evidence of the harmfulness of the political agitation, it is an evidence of his position that such agitation is essential to success. Considering such agitation essential to success, he is earnestly bent upon the bringing together of a revolutionary economic organization powerful enough to reflect its own political party, that is, its own forerunner that may afford a chance to a peaceful solution. Consequently, recognizing the fact that there are to-day in this country two rival and hostile political parties, both flying the colors of Socialism, it should be obvious that organizers of either of the two parties, acting simultaneously as I. W. W. organizers, could not choose but hamper, rather than promote the growth of the I. W. W.—*Ed. The People.*]

FOURTH LETTER
By ARTURO GIOVANNITTI
New York

I have read very attentively the articles by Comrades Wagner and Vasilio in The People of Tuesday, and the few remarks by Comrade De Leon, and, as a result, I should like to give my humble opinion and try to answer the still unanswered questions of The People's Editor.

It seems to me that both Sandgren and De Leon have given a wrong definition of what they term "the political activity of the working class," an error which has been but partly redressed when they drew a line between ballot and agitation. Yet although Sandgren and his followers want no politics, they want a revolution, and whilst De Leon excommunicates the ballot, he still persists in having an S. L. P. ticket on the very same ballot. The first forgets that a revolution must be essentially political before it can be anything else, the latter is a little afraid to reconduct the revolutionary method on the straight road of the "outside political action," to wit, the general strike and the revolt.

The question is not whether we should bother about politics or not, but how we should conduct our political fight; should we remain even temporarily within the orbit of legality, or should we get out of it altogether and enforce our rights and will with new means and weapons adequate to the opportunity of the historical moment which we cross? In Europe, to define this legal fight, for to be peaceful it must be legal, we have coined a new word: Parliamentarism—and all the question, according to me, lies in that word, that is to say, the political struggle of the working class within the capitalist state machine.

Does then Comrade De Leon mean parliamentarism when he speaks of a peaceful method of solving the Social Question? If not, where is then the necessity of having a ticket in the field so far as we don't expect and don't want to send our "Honorable Comrades" to Washington?

I shall consider only the first hypothesis and endeavor to prove as briefly as I can that parliamentary action, to use an imported word, spells simply reform and not revolution, in the real historic sense of the word. Parliament is a bourgeois institution, the cornerstone of capitalism, as it is the very same organ with which the republic struck the monarchy and through which capitalism emerged from feudalism. Previous and through the insurrectional phases of the French Revolution, the rising bourgeoisie knew that it could not fight feudalism with the legal weapons that were then possible, and realized that in order to transform society it needed first the absolute destruction of the existing State, and therefore forced and

developed a new form of State that had nothing common with the old one, i. e., the Parliament. It must be so of the proletariat as it was of the bourgeoisie. "The proletariat does not escape the common rule of all the revolutionary classes that preceded it. It also forms itself an organ for the representation of its collective interests. This organ is the labor organization, the trade syndicate. Not a class truly revolutionary can think that the use of legal machines of the existing regime can be enough to guarantee the collective interests. It must form itself its own organ and strive to make it prevail on those of the existing society." (Labriola.) In other words, a class that really intends to fulfill its historical function must be revolutionary, not in aim, but in methods and means. The task of revolution is not to construct the new society but to demolish the old one and therefore its first aim should be at the complete destruction of the existing state so as to render it absolutely powerless to re-act and re-establish itself. When revolution fails to do so, the old regime may absorb some of the new ideas but will always remain, as it was the case in Italy and Germany and as it will happen in Russia if the working class does not strike violently at the root of the monarchy and forcibly impose its own political organ both against the Czar and the Duma. In other words, when the revolutionary process gets off the track of violence and insurrection without having achieved its destructive function and comes to argue and discuss within the circle of legality, when it does not strike at the existing political machine from the outside, but comes to bore from within, it utterly fails to its new ideal, but a new action to realize historical mandate and does nothing but a mere act of reform. "To use the organs of the existing society to transform the same society means to collaborate to defend and guarantee it, to wit, do a work openly anti-revolutionary." (Sorel.)

Consequently, if the S. L. P. goes to Congress, it means that it recognizes its usefulness, and in so doing it will co-operate to its perpetuation and give the state, and therefore capitalism, a longer lease of life. Therefore, it is not only an organization with a revolutionary aim that we need, but one ready to follow the revolutionary process in not only a new ideal, but a new action to realize the same. By this, it is evident that such an organization cannot and must not employ legal and lawful methods, neither can it hope in a peaceful solution, as the simple fact that a class is revolutionary implies that it is outlaw. This, Comrade De Leon does not discuss, neither does he answer arguments with arguments and facts with facts. He does not say that such an organization would not lead the working class to victory, but he is simply worried as to how we are going to recruit it if we abandon the idea of a possible peaceful solution of the Social Question.

This peaceful solution could be attained only through parliamentary action, but, again, if capitalism has opened its Holy of Holies to an enemy class that wants not less than its head, it means

that it is no more afraid of the proletariat when the latter is willing to visit capitalism at home and talk matters over. My enemy is my enemy and I fear him while he waits for me outside with a gun or a stiletto, but when he comes in and sits down to expose his reasons I cease to fear him and the whole quarrel is liable to end with a merry supper and abundant glasses of wine with relative toasts and madrigals. How can we believe that even with the most rigid logic and with the fear of a strong revolutionary organization we could convince the master class to give itself up into the hands of the rival class that knows no Christian charity and will not commute the death sentence of capitalism? Are we then to understand that capitalism will commit suicide rather than to face the I. W. W. executioner? Is there an example in history that can justify such a sweet dream of peace and love? Not even the Holy Father, who believes in turning the left cheek when somebody slaps his right one, ever refrained from the sweet help of the hangman and other Christian accessories any time he saw his throne and holy purse attacked. Suicide is not the act of a normal being, neither have we any reasons yet to believe that the capitalist class will get crazy all at once in the last moment.

It is then by main force and through violence only that we can transform society, but collective, organized violence, not as it is now in Russia but as it was in this country fifty years ago. It is not a conspiracy but an open and loyal fight, not an assault but a regular duel, and it will not be a riotous outbreak but a good and proper civil war, if you wish to call it so. If an act of Congress can prevent all that and yield to the working class the land and the means of production and distribution, so much the better, but this is their business, not ours. How can we get the men together for this glorious proletarian epopee? Well, how did the International get them? How did we build Local 199, Tailors' Industrial Union, the strongest and most numerous in the city, where not even once was election day mentioned, although every member is fully acquainted with the take and hold clause? HOW? Why by going to them and telling them all about it without considering them either tigers or rabbits, but men who, once having understood, can prove that they are right in the good old American fashion, and put up a good fist fight when words and arguments fail.

Are then the S. P. and the S. L. P. so necessary to the I. W. W. that without the former the latter could not exist? Are the polls the only means to convince them to unite, to go to strike, to resist, and to press their action so on the political field (political agitation) that those from above will let something drop every once in a while before the whole edifice tumbles down?

Why should we speak to the working class of a peaceful settlement when probably not ONE of the S. L. P. members believe in it? Fifty vacant seats in Congress will frighten capitalism more than fifty "Honorable" Socialists sitting there and doing nothing,

and if we must use the ballot for something let us use it for the sole purpose of emptying their ranks. The future of Socialism lies only in the general strike, not merely a quiet political strike, but one that once started should go fatally to its end, i. e., armed insurrection and the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. It may be objected that it is yet too early to throw the alarm of parliamentarism in America, but the fact is that the Socialist movement has degenerated so in all European countries on account of parliamentarism, that it would be simply foolish not to take advantage of their lesson and follow another road. Let us not strike out the political clause from the I. W. W. constitution, but let us understand that the I. W. W. must develop itself as the new legislature and executive body of the land, undermine the existing one and gradually absorb the functions of the state until it can entirely substantiate it through the only means it has: The Revolution.

ANSWER.

[First of all let the fact be once more recorded that this week's opponent of the S. L. P. posture, like each and every one who preceded him, leaves unanswered the practical question put by The People at the beginning of this discussion—how can the ranks of the I. W. W., of the revolutionary army intended to take and hold the means of production, recruit the necessary forces for that eventful and final act of the revolution, if it starts by rejecting the civilized method of settling disputes, offered by the political platform, and plants itself instead upon the principle of physical force exclusively? Surely this is a question worth answering. It is essential to a common understanding. Why is the question persistently evaded? Every evasion thereof can only be construed as an evidence of inability to answer it; consequently, as demonstration of the soundness of the practical principle that it implies. The demonstration is only made all the stronger by the indulgence in vast digressions, and the taking up of space on side matters.

In the instance of this week's correspondent the evasion is all the more marked. Giovannitti starts with the admission that the question put by The People has not been answered. Indeed, it is for that very reason that he asks for space to "try to answer the still unanswered questions of The People's Editor." Does he answer that question? With not a word.

Or is this sentence, perhaps, an answer: "How can we get the men together for this glorious proletarian epopee? Well, how did the International get them?"—The sentence implies that the International did get the men together for this glorious proletarian epopee. That's news to us. If the International had "got the men together for this glorious proletarian epopee" there would be no capitalist class to-day to overthrow; the epopee would have been en-

acted. That it has not been enacted, that Giovannitti recognizes the epopee has yet to be enacted, is ample refutation of the implied claim that the International "got the men together."

Or is, perchance, this other sentence the answer promised by Giovannitti: "How can we get the men together for this glorious proletarian epopee? Well . . how is the I. W. W. getting them?" —This sentence is of a piece with that analyzed last week from the correspondence of two St. Louis opponents. That sentence does not "answer" The People's question; the sentence confirms The People's question; the sentence is fatal to the posture of The People's opponents. This discussion was initiated by Sandgren's proposition "to strike out all reference to politics in the I. W. W. preamble. Upon that The People's question, re-stated above, was put, and the contention both of Sandgren and of all who sided with him, this week's correspondent included, was and is, logically enough from their premises, that political agitation should be excluded as harmful and unnecessary. No opponent of The People's position can quote the successful agitation of the I. W. W., whose platform has the political clause, as an evidence that the ranks of the I. W. W. can be recruited with the necessary numbers upon the principle of physical force only.

Giovannitti, accordingly, leaves unanswered the question he promised to answer; and strangest of all he closes by opposing Sandgren's proposition to expunge the political clause from the I. W. W. platform! Inextricable are the contradictions that this week's opponent tangles himself in.

We might stop here. The gist of the above letter is disposed of. Nevertheless our correspondent incurs a number of collateral errors that we trust he will thank us for calling his attention to. And this we do for reason of the knowledge that frequently it happens that collateral errors are responsible for central ones. So long as the former becloud the mind, the latter remain unperceived.

Giovannitti says: "A class that really intends to fulfill its historical function must be revolutionary, not in aim but in methods and means." This sentence sins doubly against social science. Its first sinfulness lies in the use of the expression, "revolutionary methods and means." There is no such thing as "revolutionary means" or "methods." Means and methods may be good or bad, wise or unwise, timely or premature—"revolutionary" never. Physical force, the revolutionary method and means meant by our correspondent, is by no means essentially revolutionary, it may be archly reactionary. If physical force were the test of "revolution" the palm for revolutionariness would have to be awarded to Czar's establishment. Unconsciously Giovannitti himself acts obedient to this view of the matter. If he did not he would not now be in the revolutionary camp of the I. W. W.; he would have fallen in with

the Sherman crew of reactionists who resorted to physical force.* The second sinfulness of the sentence lies in its first part, the notion that the function of the proletariat "must be revolutionary, NOT IN AIM, but in methods and means." In other words, that the aim is a negligible quantity in determining the revolutionary or non-revolutionary character of a body. Such a conception of Social evolution or of the march of human events is untenable. Marx well said that force has ever been the MIDWIFE of revolutions. According to our correspondent's idea of things, however, all that is needed for the birth of a child would be the midwife; the function of the father and the mother count for nothing. There is a violent clash of physical force now in progress in Russia. If physical force were the test of "revolution" then both the contending sides would be revolutionists. We all know this is false. How do we all determine which is the side of revolution and which that of reaction? Why, by their respective AIMS.

This serious error on the part of Giovannitti leads to the following other error, which runs like a black warp through the woof of his argument. He says in one place: "Should we remain even temporarily within the orbit of LEGALITY;" in another place: "the LEGAL fight, for, to be peaceful it must be LEGAL;" again: "the use of LEGAL machines of the existing regime;" still in another place: "such an organization [the organization that we need] must not employ LEGAL and LAWFUL methods;" and so forth. The continuous iteration and re-iteration of the terms "legal," "legality," "lawful," betray a misconception of The People's posture. Giovannitti will not find the words used once by The People in this discussion. The People is not troubled with the thought of "legality." The People planted itself upon the principle of "civilization." Giovannitti and the Editor of The People are civilized men. Being civilized men they are discussing the subject politely. Were the two a couple of barbarians they would have begun by breaking each other's heads. Giovannitti's confusion of thought in the matter is such that he has read "legal" for "civilized," "legality" for "civilization," and that has interfered with his understanding of The People's arguments in this discussion, beginning with the answer to Sandgren where the principle of civilization was treated at large. Political action is the civilized, because it is the peaceful method of social debate and of ascertaining numbers. He who rejects that method places himself upon the barbarian plane, a plane where the capitalist class would be but too glad to see him, seeing that he thereby would give the capitalist class a welcome pretext to drop all regard for decency and resort to the terrorism that would suit it. But civilization is CIVILIZATION. It implies

* Chas. O. Sherman was the deposed president of the I. W. W. who pronounced the ballot "paper wadding," and sought to steer the I. W. W. back into A. F. of L. craft unionism.

not only the effort for peace, but also the knowledge of the fact that Right without Might is a thing of air. Accordingly the civilized revolutionary organization proclaims the Right, demands it, argues for it, and willingly submits to the civilized method of polling the votes—AND IT ORGANIZES ITSELF WITH THE REQUISITE PHYSICAL FORCE IN CASE ITS DEFEATED ADVERSARY SHOULD RESORT TO THE BARBARIAN'S WAY OF ENFORCING HIS WILL. The civilized man answers force with force; the barbarian begins with force. "Civilization" not "legality" demands the political clause.

A third collateral error committed by Giovannitti happens in the passage in which he quotes Labriola in support of what Labriola does not hold. Labriola belongs to the "Syndicalist" (Unionist) wing of what? Of the Socialist PARTY of Italy. The quotation from Labriola becomes a misquotation in the place where it occurs. It is perfectly sensible in connection with Labriola's position, which is as exactly that of the S. L. P. as two positions in two different countries can be.

Finally a luminous insight is obtained into the loose methods of thought of our opponents by the following passage from Giovannitti's letter: "Fifty vacant seats in Congress will frighten capitalism more than fifty 'Honorable' Socialists sitting there and doing nothing, and if we must use the ballot for something let us use it for the sole purpose of emptying their ranks,"—a notion that can only proceed from a mistaken comprehension of facts in the case. Even if the whole Working Class abstained from voting, there would be NOT ONE SINGLE SEAT VACANT, the capitalist candidates would then be elected unanimously by the capitalists themselves.

The theme of this discussion is serious. It should be approached, not with anger or preformed thoughts, but with a mind open to apprehend the facts and to reason from them.—*Ed. The People.*]

FIFTH LETTER

By H. B. HOFFMAN

New York

Whether the debate on the political situation is closed or not it is up to the editor of the Daily People to reply to the following trite questions and answers. And as no comment can be made without presenting the matter from which the argument is drawn I would be pleased to see this contribution printed in full:

The questions are addressed to an S. L. P. man:

1. "Are you a revolutionary body?" "We are and decidedly so."

2. "Very well. If, then, you are a political party you are organized to enforce or evolve legislative enactments?" (Hesitatingly). "Yes, we are organized for legislative purposes."

3. "And yet you call yourself revolutionary. Legislation within the capitalist state, in order to be declared valid, must be of a mild constitutional nature. It must partake of the capitalists' notion of validity. It must harmonize with the existing order of things, must it not?" "Yes."

"So that if you harmonize with the capitalist state you can effect reforms, radical or ultra radical but such reforms are drawn within the boundary lines of private property. In fact you succeed in paliating rotten conditions, you ease the lot of the workingman and make him able to bear up. You unconsciously harmonize the workingman to existing conditions because you build up a hope in him that you are there to help him, and that through legislation. You are in fact doing the work of the reformer which he as a useful lieutenant of the capitalist can better do himself. Hearst can bring about more reforms through legislation in a shorter time than can five revolutionary parties.

"You furthermore build up a false hope which the working class will not forgive you, when they realize the emptiness of it. As a conscious Socialist you know that the capitalist is well entrenched; legislatures, courts and police make up his armaments of war, all effective legislation can be nullified by the courts which are generally not of an elective nature. You know the helplessness of your situation and yet you would goad the workers on and make them believe in the strength of legislation."

"No! No! We are in politics for agitational purposes," answers the disturbed S. L. P. man.

"Ha! ha! in politics for agitational purposes! Were I not fully conscious of your extreme honesty I would call you a knave. As it is I am content to think you are in the wrong.

"A political party means something. It has its classical mission which is popularly understood. A political party is a body either in office or trying to get in office. It nominates men for especial offices.

In coming before the electors it makes certain specific promises which it also promises to enforce if elected. Absurd is it not to imagine that it can masquerade as a political party with no political intentions. Absurd is it not to simply spread agitational propaganda and yet go to the trouble of organizing a political body. It is misrepresentation, culminating in a farcical tragedy. And how absurd would it be to practice both politics and agitational propaganda through a political party and yet sustain its revolutionary character of the body. It is a reformer's carnival with the fitting mask of the masquerader."

ANSWER.

[Again let, first of all, the significant fact be recorded that, along with his predecessors, this week's opponent of the S. L. P. position also leaves unanswered the question put by The People at the beginning of this discussion—how can the ranks of the I. W. W., of the revolutionary army, intended to take and hold the means of production, etc., recruit the necessary forces for that eventful and final act of the revolution if it starts by rejecting the civilized method of settling social disputes, offered by the political platform, and plants itself instead upon the principle of physical force only?

Surely none can claim the question to be a trick, or unfair. Men who aim at the overthrow of the capitalist system; men who recognize the necessity of a revolutionary economic organization of the working class to accomplish the revolution; finally men who reject the civilized method of social warfare, political action;—such men certainly owe to the public, the working class public, an answer to the question put above—how do you expect to recruit your forces?

The persistent avoidance to answer this question justifies the conclusion that it is unanswerable; that it knocks the bottom from under the notion of rejecting political action; that indeed, the question needs but to be put in order to expose the error of the notion. Nor is the evasion at all concealed by an answer which puts other questions and, as Hoffman does this week, himself furnishes a series of answers unwarranted, in the main, by the exhaustive answers given by The People to previous correspondents on the subject, and the well known posture of the S. L. P. in the premises.

The facts in the case are simply these:

The Socialist party asserts that political action is all-sufficient to emancipate the Working Class. "Elect us to office," it says, "and we will emancipate you."

Whatever there is intellectually clear and clean in the Labor Movement readily sees through the error; it even sees deeply and perceives that such a body, if it does not start corrupt, must inevitably degenerate into a fraud upon the proletariat. The emancipation of the proletariat, that is, the Socialist Republic, can not be the result of legislative enactment. No bunch of office holders will

emancipate the proletariat. The emancipation of the proletariat can only be the mass-action of the proletariat itself, "moving in," taking possession of the productive powers of the land.

This correct, this indisputable position leads directly to the principle that the revolutionary proletariat can not fulfill its historic mission unless it is so organized economically, that it can take possession integrally, shed the slough of the capitalist political State, and assume the reins of industrial administration of the country. The industrially organized revolutionary Union, in short, the I. W. W., was the product of this insight into things.

This position, by reason of its very purity, brought its lees along with it. An element there arose, which—whether nauseated by the unavoidable corruption in the pure and simple political Socialist party; or whether, dazzled by the very brilliancy of the position itself, disabled them from seeing aught but that—contends that political action should be wholly discarded; accordingly, that the I. W. W. should drop the political clause from its preamble where it expresses the necessity of uniting the working class "on the political as well as on the industrial field."

The I. W. W. denies the soundness of such a position. It goes further; it points to the fatal error involved in the same. The rejection of political action would throw the I. W. W. back upon the methods of barbarism—physical force exclusively. Where, as in Russia, no other method exists, none other can be taken up. Where, however, as in the rest of the Western Civilization, especially in America, the civilized method exists of public agitation, and of peaceful submission to the counting of the ballots that express the contending views;—where such methods exist, the man or organization that rejects them does so at his or its peril. This is especially the case in the capitalist America of to-day. The capitalist class, however powerful, is not omnipotent. It feels constrained to render at least external homage to the Genius of the Age. The Genius of the Age demands free speech and a free vote. So soon, however, as a Labor Organization were to reject the peaceful trial of strength, the capitalist class would be but too delighted to apply the system of Russian Terrorism. The long and short of it all is that the revolution could not gather the necessary recruits. On the other hand, clad in the vestments of civilized, fully civilized conflict, the I. W. W. recognizes the indispensible usefulness of political agitation whereby it may demand the unconditional surrender of the capitalist class; whereby it may preach and teach the reasons thereof; whereby it may express its willingness to abide by the fiat of the ballot, that is, by the peaceful trial of strength; and by reason of such conduct, recruit, drill and organize the physical force which it may need in order to safeguard the civilized because peaceful victory that it has striven to win. Putting the matter in a nut-shell—without the revolutionary economic organization of the Working Class the day of the Socialist political victory would be

the day of its defeat; without the revolutionary political action of Socialism, the revolutionary economic organization of the Working Class can not be fully shaped for action.

The Socialist Labor Party represents this view. Though recognizing its preponderatingly economic importance, it perceives its incidental political necessity.

"Ha!" cries out Hoffman, our this week's opponent. "A masquerade!"

The ways of civilization are no mask on the face of civilized man. The ways of civilization are part and parcel of the civilized man's being; they sharply mark the profile of his face:

For the same reason, and by the identical principle, that Sherman's defeat in the I. W. W. could be encompassed only by the policy of those delegates who went to last September's convention sincerely believing, not masked with the belief, that the man was honest, but who soon as they found him out a scoundrel, grabbed him by the slack of his reputation and threw him out of the Convention and the I. W. W.,—for the same reason, and by the identical principle, the overthrow of the Capitalist Class will be the work of those men only with whom the ways of civilization are, not a mask but part of their nature; men who insist upon exhausting the ways of civilization, and who, when Capitalism shall have dropped its mask, will be found ready to resort to the ways of barbarism—all the more determinedly so because the method is repellant to the civilized cause that they are the apostles of.

For the same reason, and by the identical principle, that Sherman would have remained in possession of both the convention and the I. W. W. if the policy of those delegates had prevailed who went to the convention convinced in advance of the man's scoundrelism, and who wanted to throw him out from the start,—for the same reason, and by the identical principle, the Capitalist Class would remain enthroned if the policy were to prevail of that impatient and angry element who reject in advance the expectation of a peaceful trial of strength, and would start with resort to physical force.

The S. L. P. ballot demands the unconditional surrender of the Capitalist Class. The S. L. P., accordingly preaches the Revolution, teaches the Revolution, and thereby enables the recruiting and organizing of the physical force element requisite to enforce the Revolution. The S. L. P. does all this, including the latter, because it strikes the posture of holding the Ruling Class to the civilized method of a peaceful trial of strength.

Maybe the S. L. P. will triumph at the hustings, that is, win out and be rightly counted. In this case the S. L. P. would forthwith dissolve; the political State would be ipso facto abolished; the industrially and integrally organized proletariat will without hindrance assume the administration of the productive powers of the land. Is this impossible? We admit it is highly improbable.

More likely is the event of S. L. P. triumph at the polls, but de-

feat by the election inspectors, or resistance, as the Southern slaveholders did at the election of Lincoln. In that case also the S. L. P. would forthwith dissolve into its economic organization. That body, having had the opportunity to recruit and organize its forces, and the civilized method of peaceful trial of strength having been abandoned, the Might of the proletariat will then be there, free to resort to the last resort, and physically mop the earth with the barbarian Capitalist Class.

Most likely, however, the political expression of the I. W. W. will not be afforded the time for triumph at the polls. Most likely the necessities of capitalism will, before then, drive it to some lawless act that will call forth resistance. A strike will break out; capitalist brutality will cause the strike to spread; physical, besides moral support, will pour in from other and not immediately concerned branches of the Working Class. A condition of things—economic, political, social-atmospheric—will set in, akin to the condition of things in 1902, at the time of the great coal miners' strike, or in 1894, at the time of the Pullman-A. R. U. strike. What then? The issue will then depend wholly upon the degree, in point of quality and in point of quantity, that the organization of the I W. W. will have reached. If it has reached the requisite minimum, then, that class-instinct of the proletariat that Marx teaches the Socialist to rely upon, and the chord of which the Capitalist Class instinctively seeks, through its labor fakirs, to keep the Socialist from touching, will readily crystallize around that requisite I. W .W. minimum of organization. The Working Class would then be organically consolidated. Further efforts for a peaceful measuring of strength would then have been rendered superfluous by Capitalist barbarism. Capitalism would be swept aside forthwith. For this consummation, however, in the eventuality under consideration, be it remembered, the I. W. W. must have reached the requisite quantitative and qualitative minimum of perfection, AND THAT IN TURN WILL DEPEND UPON THE FREENESS OF ITS PREVIOUS AGITATIONAL WORK, A FREEDOM THAT IT NEVER COULD ENJOY EXCEPT IT PLANTS ITSELF UPON THE PRINCIPLE THAT RECOGNIZES THE CIVILIZED METHOD OF PEACEFUL TRIAL OF STRENGTH—THE POLITICAL BALLOT.

Accordingly it all comes back and boils down to the question, How is the I. W. W. to recruit and organize its forces if it starts with the absolute rejection of the political ballot?

All talk concerning the thorns that beset the political stalk are beside the question. Such talk our opponents should reserve for the pure and simple political Socialist party men. Addressed to the S. L. P. men, such talk is superfluous and inconsequential—as inconsequential as would be extensive dissertations on the stench that periodically is felt in dissecting rooms, and of the diseases such stenches occasionally breed: THE DISSECTING ROOM IS

NECESSARY;—as inconsequential as would be extensive dissertations on the accidents and discomforts that result from ocean travel: OCEAN TRAVEL IS REQUISITE. The pure and simple political Socialist man is on the political question what a man would be who favors the dissecting room for the sake of its stench, or the man who favors ocean travel for the sake of its perils and discomforts. That, our physical force opponents know, is not the S. L. P. position. The S. L. P. knows that the political State is worthless, and can not legislate the Socialist Republic into life. The S. L. P. man clings to political action because it is an absolute necessity for the formation of that organization—the I. W. W.—which is both the embryo of the Workers' Republic and the physical force that the proletariat may, and in all likelihood will, need, to come to its own.—*Ed. The People.*]

SIXTH LETTER
By JOHN SANDGREN
San Francisco

Having been granted the privilege of answering the criticism of my views "As to Politics," I shall gladly avail myself thereof.

First, as to the strength of the working class at the ballot box, I have no alternative but to accept the figures given by the Editor of The People, namely that the working class in 1900 constituted seventy per cent. of the population and that we would, theoretically, be able to muster a majority at the ballot box. But it must be admitted that the change from 1890, when the working class were fifty-five per cent., with a downward numerical tendency, is so astonishing, that one may justly question the correctness of at least one set of the figures.

However, seeing that little importance is attached by my critics, who must be considered to represent the S. L. P. position, to the ballot as such, and to the question of our strength at the ballot box, discussion on this point may be dropped.

But, from another point of view the figures I gave under this head, somewhat amended, are of great significance in attempting to determine the proper posture toward political activity on the part of the working class, namely in the following sense:

Out of the whole mass of actual wage workers, men, women and children, there are approximately eighteen millions who can in no manner be directly interested in politics, to wit: 1,700,000 children wage workers, 4,800,000 women wage workers, 3,500,000 foreign wage workers, 5,000,000 Negro wage workers, 3,000,000 floating and otherwise disfranchised wage workers; total, 18,000,000 approximately.

And nobody will deny that in the building up of the economic organization and constructing the frame work of the new, collective form of society, we will sooner or later have to take account of every one of these eighteen million wage workers. In fact, they are "grist for our mill," but what is to be done with them politically?

This open admission on the part of spokesmen for the S. L. P., although not new or brought out for the first time in this discussion—this admission that the ballot counts for little or nothing, will come as a shock to many faithful adherents of the ballot, who with one of my critics bravely exclaim: "Outvote them we shall!" This admission is another sign of the fact that working class "parliamentarism" has come upon evil days, the tendency throughout the whole world being to bring economic organization to the forefront and relegate politics to the rear. It may be hard for those who have seen and helped the revolutionary movement grow on

political lines to vigorous manhood to now discard politics; the new tendency to reorganize the forces on exclusive economic lines, entering the political arena only in the negative way of "direct action" may strike them as unholy violations of sacred principles. But as Marx says in effect: "The proletarian movement ever comes back to its starting point, ever retraces its steps and begins anew, until it has finally struck solid foundation." So it is now. Parliamentary experience having brought out the weak points of the political method, a revolt from the "million masses" brings into existence an organization in which the workers shall meet the master class face to face (direct action), thus realizing, as Comrade Bruckere says, the Marxian motto: "The emancipation of the workers by the workers themselves."

In regard to the position that we needs must continue political organization for the sake of political agitation, to be used as a shield under which to mold and form the working class movement proper, i. e., the economic organization, I am far from convinced of its correctness.

Political organization and agitation without faith in the ballot or without, as in Russia, demanding the ballot, or as in Sweden, an extension of the franchise, is like running a windmill without any grain to grind or without any millstones to grind it with. The position being an artificial one, it will soon become untenable. It WILL FAIL to accomplish what it was intended for: to deceive the master class as to our purpose; it WILL accomplish what we least desire; to deceive our fellow workers and confuse. Such is the penalty one always has to pay for one of the gravest tactical errors in the revolutionary movement: double sense, dissimulation, upon which see page 85 in De Leon's work: "Two Pages from Roman History."

Political organization and agitation becomes an absurdity without the ballot, without parliamentarism. On this score allow me to quote from a recent article in the International Socialist Review on the Italian movement: "Parliaments are not and cannot become organs of social revolution. The inherent social and economic qualities and tendencies of parliamentarism limit the possibilities of reforms. . . It is a most ridiculous utopian supposition that a Socialist party ever can obtain a majority in the parliaments of any country. The social revolution which shall establish 'the autonomous government of production managed by the associated working class' (Labriola), is above all a technical and economic fact which cannot be called into existence by an incompetent assembly such as the parliaments of all countries are, but must result from the autonomous development of the capacity, and from the spontaneous initiation of those who attend to the process of production."

Again, I hold that my critics have not established the fact that the I. W. W. needs any shield or that the political organizations have any shield to offer. While the I. W. W. certainly needs the well trained membership of the S. L. P., I cannot but see that we

must respectfully decline their offer to hold a shield over us to protect our coddling infancy. The I. W. W. can do, and is doing, everything in the way of agitation that the political organization is doing, it can address by word of mouth, it can distribute and sell literature, it can organize, and what more can the S. L. P. do? In fact, it would be a direct advantage to have the shield out of the way, as we could then address our fellow-workers somewhat in this way:

"Politics is the game of capitalism; it is a flimsy shell game in which your very lives are the stakes played for. As long as you workingmen are allowing yourselves to be bamboozled into pinning your faith to the ballot, the capitalist class does not want any better snap. For no matter how you vote, capitalism is perfectly safe. 'Fraise be to God,' the capitalist class whispers, 'the blamed fools are still voting!' Therefore, throw away that old weapon of times bygone, the boomerang-vote, and spring into the ranks of the militant industrial army, where shoulder to shoulder with our fellows we shall gain victory through organized strength." But here are some of the best fighters of the I. W. W., one night fearlessly proclaiming emancipation through organization and the next night "holding the shield" and exorting street audiences to vote the S. L. P. or S. P. ticket, when they well knew that such course is about as fruitless as an Eskimo dog's barking at the moon. No, the shield is not needed, not appreciated, and does not shield. Past has shown that the political agitator enjoys no more immunity or security than others. He may be "legal" and "constitutional," but legal opinions and supreme court decisions are made to order and cost only the paper on which they are written, so we are as much exposed to "law and order" if we parade in the masque and disguise of politicians as if we come openly forward as an economic organization, not to speak of the advantages of an open, straightforward course.

To those who defend political organization and agitation, because it would suggest to the ruling class our willingness to adorn ourselves in the conventional garb of legality, civilization, peace, etc., I would put the question: when did economic organization cease to be a legal, civilized and peaceful weapon? In fact, I would maintain that it is one of the newest and most perfected products of modern civilization. To those who plead for a much to be desired peaceful solution of the social problem, I wish to say that economic organization even with the purpose of taking and holding is primarily a peaceful organization, and it is a straining at gnats to maintain that politics is a more civilized, more peaceful weapon, when the political organization proposes to carry behind its back "the big stick" of the economic organization, with which to emphasize its civilized and peaceable intentions. The whole difference is the difference between direct and indirect action.

The question of peace or war is optional with the master class, it is not for us to decide which it shall be. But it is our duty to be prepared for both. Only the economic organization can do this. The

political organization is capable of preparing for neither. It is incompetent to bring about a peaceful solution, because society will have to be reconstructed on economic lines; it would be incapable of preparing for war because its organization is only a general staff without a regular army. But why speak of peace or war! The capitalist class has already chosen war. Our blood has run in torrents, as in the Paris Commune, or bespattered the road to Hazelton and Cripple Creek; the rope has strangled some of our early champions and is in preparation for others. To speak of a possibility of peaceable settlement between us and the master class, is the same as the mutual agrēement between the man flat on his back and him who holds the dagger to his throat. The war has been going on these many years and is raging fiercely now. How can anybody suggest a peaceable settlement, especially as we demand complete surrender?

Another thing which seems to worry some of my critics is that if we were to discard politics and have only an economic organization, we would, Peter Schlemil-like, be without a shadow or reflex, which is against the rule, as no economic manifestation should appear in public without its political reflex or shadow any more than a self-respecting citizen would go out without his shadow. These critics seem to forget that a revolutionary, economic organization with an aim to reconstruct society, has its reflex or shadow projected forward, and that no true reflex could be contained in the frame of politics. Insofar as the organization also serves the incidental purpose of fighting the every-day battles of the working class it is entitled to a shadow on the political field. But that shadow will be thrown as indicated in Bruckere's report of the French movement; our organized strength will cause the ruling class to fall all over themselves in an attempt to "reflect" us on the political field, in order to save themselves from a worse calamity.

For these and other reasons I still maintain that the Preamble of the I. W. W. should be so amended as to exclude political action. Only thus will we have found a solid basis upon which all workingmen can unite. The operation may be painful, but it must be endured.

ANSWER.

[Again, for the sake of keeping the record clear, the first thing to be done is to record the fact that the question asked by The People at the incipience of this discussion remains unanswered, to wit, how are the ranks of the I. W. W., of the revolutionary army intended to "take and hold" the means of production, etc., to recruit the necessary forces in America for that eventful and final act of the revolution, if the I. W. W. were to start by rejecting the civilized method of settling social disputes, the method of a peaceful trial of strength, offered by political action, and plant itself, in-

stead, upon the principle of physical force only?—This is the issue. Sandgren, like the others who hold with him, leaves it untouched.

We say Sandgren leaves it untouched. That is putting the case mildly for him. In so far as he can be said to have at all touched it, he overthrows himself. What was Sandgren's motion, so to speak? It was that THE I. W. W. DROP THE POLITICAL CLAUSE FROM ITS PREAMBLE. He who comes with such a proposition, and is met with the question, How are we to recruit our forces if we start by discarding the political, or peaceful trial of strength?—he who comes with a motion such as Sandgren's, and is met with the question just put, cannot do, as Sandgren does, show that the I. W. W. to-day, with the political clause which he would strike out, is doing the very work that we claim it could not do in the long run without that clause. If such a statement was meant as an answer to our question, the answer overthrows the original motion. It yields the point at issue.

We may again stop here. All that is essential to the issue is covered by the above observation. Nevertheless, again mindful of the experience that central errors often derive their nourishment, if they do not actually rise, from collateral errors, we shall here take up the principal mistakes, in Sandgren's reply—mistakes, which, though irrelevant to the real issue are important, relatively and absolutely.

First—Those critics of Sandgren, who agree with him against political action but find fault with his looking for support in statistics, do him and their cause injustice. There is no theory but should be based upon facts. Sandgren yielded to a correct instinct in seeking the support of figures for his conclusion. Who knows to what extent his erroneous conclusion was due to the erroneous figures that he quoted. Yielding to the same correct instinct he correctly returns to statistics. Again his statistical reasoning is at fault. The array of items that foot up eighteen million child, woman, foreigner, Negro, floating, and otherwise disfranchised wage workers by no means warrants the conclusion that they "can in no manner be directly interested in politics." Far from it. The conclusion reveals one of the false notions that dominate the anti-political action mind. That mind cannot disengage itself from the notion that political action begins and ends with conventions, nominations of tickets and voting. This is false. Political action, conducted by revolutionists, consists in something else besides those acts; it consists in something else infinitely more important than any or all of those acts; it consists in revolutionary agitation and education upon the civilized plane that presupposes a peaceful trial of strength: that is, settlement of the dispute. "What is to be done with them [these child, woman, foreign, Negro, floating and otherwise disfranchised wage workers] politically?" asks our friend. What? Fully sixty per cent. of them, that is, all, except the infants and the sick, can be made the carriers of the agitational and educational propaganda of the revolution conducted upon

the civilized plane. Though they be not entitled to cast a single vote, they can distribute literature, and those who have the gift—though foreign, female, Negro or otherwise disfranchised—can by speech promote the revolution by teaching it on the political platform.—We all know that this actually happens.

Second—The indisputably correct and, indeed, cheering fact mentioned by Sandgren concerning the widespread revulsion from "parliamentarism," or be it pure and simple Socialism, by no means warrants his conclusion that, therefore, the other extreme, total rejection of political action, is correct. Such a conclusion is a "non sequitur," is illogical from his own premises; indeed: his own premises warn against the conclusion. The knowledge that the pendulum just was at one extreme is a warning against, rather than an argument in favor of the point which the pendulum is bound to strike immediately after—the other extreme.

Aye, Sandgren correctly alludes to Marx. The proletarian revolutions as Marx says, "criticise themselves constantly; constantly interrupt themselves in their own course; come back to what seems to have been accomplished, in order to start over anew; scorn with cruel thoroughness the HALF-MEASURES, weaknesses and meannesses of their first attempts;" etc. The proletarian revolution started with exclusive physical force attempts; it "criticised," "interrupted" itself, and swung over to the other extreme of exclusive politics; it is again "criticising" and "interrupting" itself and receding from that second extreme posture. The experience it has been making teaches it to "scorn with cruel thoroughness the HALF-MEASURES, weaknesses and meannesses of its first attempts." Experience teaches it that all extremes are HALF-MEASURES; that all half-measures are WEAKNESS; that all weakness leads to MEANNESS—corruption and treason. What corruption and treason the half-measure of pure and simple political Socialism leads to is palpably shown by the record of the Socialist party Careys of Massachusetts, Hillquits of New York, Buechs and Bergers of Wisconsin. At the same time, written in the blood of the workers is the corruption and treason that flows from the half-measure of exclusively physical force, or so-called "direct" action. The names of the McParlands, of Molly Maguire fame, and of the McKenneys of modern Colorado fame should suffice as hints—to say nothing of what the more recent Dumases and Petriellas are capable of.

The S. L. P. seeks not patronizingly to officiate as a shield to the I. W. W. The endeavor of the S. L. P. is directed toward promoting the vigorous development of the I. W. W., to the end that the I. W. W. may, schooled by the experience of previous half-measures, itself set up its own shield and itself hold up that shield which will protect it, in front, against the pure and simple politician; in the rear, against the "agent provocateur."

Third—Sandgren slips badly when he quotes, against the S. L. P. attitude, page 85 of De Leon's "Two Pages from Roman History," wherein the warning is correctly uttered and illustrated

against the practice of double sense and dissimulation in revolutions. The passage is recommended to our readers. It describes Gaius Gracchus as bent upon overthrowing the power of the Senate, but keeping the secret "locked in his breast," and indulging in a bit of pantomime that could not throw his foes off their guard, and only succeeded in confusing, thereby "keeping away forces needful to his purpose, whom straightforward language would have attracted." We take Sandgren for too honest a seeker after truth to wish to imply that anything the S. L. P. has done, said or printed, whether with regard to the economic or the political action, can even remotely be compared to that HALF-MEASURE of Gaius Gracchus. The ballot of the S. L. P., and the ballot of that political reflex which the I. W. W., as a full-measure body, is bound to reflect, demands and will demand plump and plain the unconditional surrender of the capitalist class; that ballot does, and will, place the revolution on the civilized plane of a peaceful trial of strength; last not least, and above all, that ballot, equipped with all the experience of our Age, will school the proletariat in the absolute necessity of organizing the physical force—the integrally industrial Union of the working class—which it may and in all probability will need in order to enforce its program in case the capitalist class resorts to the brute measures of the barbarian. There is no "double sense" or "dissimulation" in that posture.

Fourth—Not unless Sandgren would make out of Marx a sort of Bible—a compilation of scraps from different periods of civilization, and therefore often contradictory—can he quote the Marxian saying "the emancipation of the workers by the workers themselves," as an argument against political action, seeing that the same Marx stated: "only the Trades Union can give birth to the true party of Labor." Was Marx's idea that the Union would give birth to a useless thing? If "the emancipation of the workers by the workers themselves" excludes the thought of political action, then Marx floundered when he made the latter utterance. Marx was not infallible. If he is found to have erred the error should be specifically pointed out. Otherwise, in quoting Marx, he should be quoted fully.

Fifth—The next slip made by Sandgren is closely related to the previous one. He quotes Labriola. The quotation is a misquotation. It is that because it is put in a way suggestive of the idea that Labriola wholly spurns political action. The idea is wrong, Labriola's syndicalists (substantially the attitude of the S. L. P.) are affiliated with—what?—with the Socialist PARTY of Italy!—A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION! The sentiments in the quotation from Labriola are not different from those of the S. L. P. Such sentiments recognize the necessity of the ballot, without "pinning our faith" to it. They recognize in the ballot a potential means of a peaceful trial of strength, and they, so far from "pinning their faith to the ballot," provide for the organization of the physical force, which the political agitation enables us

to organize, and which in all likelihood will be needed, but which the Movement will not allow itself to be heated into the blind passion of pushing out of the proper perspective.

Sixth—We must frankly admit our utter inability to handle Sandgren's contention that an economic organization determined to ignore the political ballot, is "a peaceful organization." Either he is color blind, or we are on the subject.

Seventh—Finally, Sandgren's closing paragraphs, declaring that there is WAR now, consequently, what is the use of considering peaceful solutions, reflects the unfortunate psychology of our anti-politics friends. Why spend so much time with claims about the peacefulness of the revolutionary economic organization, quotations from Labriola and Marx, statistical figures, parallels in history, etc., etc.? What they mean is that there is WAR now, and consequently we might as well fight. THERE IS NO WAR NOW. Unreliable are the conclusions of men who take a word, used in a technical sense, transfer that word to another technical sphere, and then give it, in the second, the meaning it has in the first sphere. There is CLASS WAR to-day; but the word WAR in that sense means something esentially different from the word WAR in the sense used by Sandgren when he says we might as well wage WAR now against the capitalist class. War, in the sense used by Sandgren, has not yet broken out. If it had his articles could not be published in The People, this discussion could not be going on, the capitalist institutions would not be available for the transportation of our thoughts, and neither could write with the peace and comfort that we do. There is no such WAR now. If there were, the discussion would be superfluous; the very fact that Sandgren has raised his anti-politics point is proof that there is no such WAR now. The only justification for Sandgren's contention would be the actual existence of war. Seeing there is none, the ground fails on which to sustain his point.

In the absence of the only reason why political action should be dropped—the existence of actual war—the only question of moment is how to equip ourselves for that war that we are all agreed we shall in all likelihood be involved in. The question put by The People at the incipience of this discussion remains unanswered. The glove, thrown down to our anti-political friends, remains on the field challenging to be picked up.—*Ed. The People.*]

SEVENTH LETTER

By V. H. KOPALD

New York

At the time Comrade Sandgren started the discussion "As to Politics," I was in complete accord with the Editor. Since, I have gone over to the other side, and I wish to give a few reasons why.

In actual fact we live now in a state of war, a war of classes. It was always a maxim of war: Do what the enemy does not want you to. The capitalist class let you do all the political agitation you want, but use all obstacles possible, even force and gallows against economic agitation.

No matter what anybody thinks, the end of all political agitation must be the ballot; and the ballot and election is one of the principal assets of capitalism. After every election the whole capitalist class is elated, the proletarian is depressed. Naturally so. The sight of even a would-be people's tribune, like Hearst, getting "defeated" by a majority of 75,000 makes comrade Sandgren argue that the capitalists are more numerous than the proletarians, and makes thousands of proletarians think, Socialism is hundreds of years away. It puts at the disposal of the capitalist the unanswerable argument, We'll give in to Socialism, whenever the majority of people want Socialism. As to civilized argument and agitation:

What is "civilized agitation?" Are we in a state of war, or not? If we are in a state of war, then war is hell and civilization is impossible. We have only one object in view: emancipation of the working class. Civilized agitation between bandits and victims! Nonsense!

With all my means in my power I shall still support The People, as The People is more industrial than political. But I shall support no political party. The little energy I could give to the former before I shall now turn to the Industrial Workers of the World.

ANSWER.

[The distinguishing feature of this week's contribution against the position of the Industrial Workers of the World, whose preamble proposes the unification of the working class "on the political as well as on the industrial field;" or the correlative position of the S. L. P., whose literature announces that, without the economic organization the day of the political victory of Socialism would be the day of its defeat, and that, without political action, which places the Social Revolution in America upon the civilized plane of endeavoring to reach a peaceful trial of strength, the emancipation of the workers would be indefinitely postponed, and

could then be reached only by wading through a massacre, both the delay and the then assuredly vast amount of bloodshed being brought on and rendered necessary by the workers themselves; in short, the distinguishing feature of this week's contribution against all political action and in favor of physical force only—that distinguishing feature lies in that this week's contribution indulges in no feints. Kopald wastes no time upon the corruption that politics engender; he consumes no space with recitals of the dangers that beset politics; he resorts to no needless quotations concerning the revolutionary character of the Labor movement; he leaves alone all attempts at statistical display; he gives a wide berth to phrases and to controversial finessings;—he says plump and plain what he means. What he means is that there is *actual war to-day.* If all the previous contributors against politics, and in favor of physical force only had been as clear in their minds upon the thought that was working upon them, then they would have taken less space; they would have saved us much work; and the question—how are the ranks of the Industrial Workers of the World, of the economic revolutionary army intended to "take and hold" the means of production, etc., to recruit the necessary forces in America for that eventful and final act of the revolution if the Industrial Workers of the World were to start by rejecting the civilized method for settling social disputes, the method of a peaceful trial of strength, offered by political action, and plant itself, instead, upon the principle of physical force only?—this question, put by "The People" at the inception of the discussion, and left unanswered up to date, would not have been put. It would have been unnecessary. The question could be met only in one of two ways —either by answering it straightforwardly, or by pronouncing it preposterous. Kopald is the only contributor who can not be charged with having evaded the question. His contribution amounts to pronouncing the question preposterous. From his premises he is right. But his premises are wrong.

Of course, if indeed our present state were one of *actual war,* then a question that proceeds from the premises of there being *actual peace,* would be preposterous. Of course, if actual war had already broken out, then none but a lunatic would strike the posture of a possible "peaceful trial of strength." Such a posture would not rest upon the elevation of civilization; it would be a mockery of civilization. Such a posture would rest upon the depths of stupidity. With bullets flying around, and the "dead line" established by pickets, there is nothing left but force. Woe would be to the proletariat of America, woe to the emancipation of the proletariat of the world, whose emancipation depends upon that of their American fellow wage slave, if the outbreak of actual war found the working class of America as disorganized as now they are. Were that to happen, then that which The People has been warning against, as the inevitable result of a system of organization that

started with the rejection of the civilized method of striving for a peaceful trial of strength, which political action alone offers—then, that result would not be questioned by our opponents. The movement of the American working class would find itself dwarfed into a conspiracy; and they could see their actions reflected in the actions of the Russian revolutionists: compelled to move about in disguise, creeping stealthily at night to place bombs in the chimneys of the residences of the American Wittes, the heroines among their women sacrificing their chastity upon the altars of Freedom as the only means to gain access to the soldiery of the Despot class in order to stir them to mutiny, as was done by several heroic Russian revolutionary women in the fortress of Kronstadt. We are confident in the belief that Kopald thanks his stars that actual war is not yet. The statement that the "Capitalist class use all obstacles, even force and gallows against economic agitation" is mere rhetoric. The issue in this discussion can not be settled by rhetoric. Obstacles? yes, many; force? yes, quite often; the gallows? that also, occasionally;—these and other devices does the capitalist class apply against the economic agitation—and it has applied them, though net yet the gallows, against revolutionary political agitation as well. It has done all that in the course of the *class war*. But the "class war," that socio-economic term, is not *actual war*.

All reasoning, proceeding from the premises that there is *actual war* now, proceeds from incomplete premises; being incomplete the reasoning is premature; such reasoning can not choose but be false in consequence, and, by every operation, multiplying into wider error.

There is no *actual war* now. The question put by The People at the incipience of the discussion stands.

* * *

We rely upon it that the sense of right on the part of our opponents will do us the justice to admit their side has been treated with fairness. The contributors have not been limited in space; their contributions have not been mutilated; the subject has during these months been thoroughly and courteously ventilated; an impartial and thoughtful audience, bent upon ascertaining the best in behalf of our common cause, will have read and reflected. Further discussion on the subject should be unnecessary. There must be an end even to the best of things. Moreover, there are imperative calls upon the limited space of the Weekly People for other matters.

Accordingly the *discussion* is closed with this issue. We say the *discussion*. The columns of The People will remain open under the head "As to Politics" to any reader who will furnish a direct answer to the question that The People has propounded, and which has been repeated above: what that question purports, the discussion has made clear. None but *direct answers* will be

accepted; such answers, if forthcoming, need occupy but little space. If the question is answerable, the movement is entitled to it. The S. L. P. is not nailed to any special "means;" it is bent upon a "goal." The S. L. P. will hail any "means" that will stand the test of reason and experience, and would give justifiable promise of reaching the goal more swiftly than the means of combined political and economic action, to which the Party now holds.

There still remain unpublished five communications. Four of them—George F. Spettel's of St. Paul, Minn.; O. Eherich's of Oakland, Cal.; Charles Rice's of New York; and Julius Kiefe's of Cincinnati, Ohio—will be successively published in the course of the next two weeks. With the exception of Kiefe's these communications contain bona fide questions exclusively. Under ordinary circumstances they would have been answered in the Letter Box. It is, however, preferable in this instance to publish the questions themselves. They will appear under the head "As to Politics," with the answers attached. Kiefe's communication, while embodying questions, might be justly excluded seeing that it trends on the controversial, and also wanders from the question. Nevertheless its shortness assists in giving it the benefit of being considered as bona fide questions only. It will go in.

The fifth communication, from Goldie Karnoil, St. Louis, Mo., is barred by the decision to close the *discussion*. It is a lengthy, eleven-page closely written and merely controversial production, that merely repeats past assertions made by the lady's side of the issue, and that, although it is the last one received, having come in only last week, again evades the question put by The People. Phrases like these—"every lost strike is a lesson;" "since our planet revolves through space nothing of lasting value for the working class has ever been accomplished through preaching;" etc., etc.;—are no answer to the question. Of course, every event is a lesson: even the Thaw trial is a lesson. Of course, preaching alone is worthless: "aims" without "organization" to carry them out are, as The People has shown before, just so much hot air. Still less are phrases of which the following is a type—"once class-conscious and organized, there is no power on earth to keep the working class from taking over production"—an answer to the question. That is a begging of the question. Finally, and least of all, is the repetition of the statement that the Industrial Workers of the World (with its present preamble proclaiming the necessity of working class unity "on the *political*, as well as on the *industrial* field") is organizing grandly—least of all is that an answer to the question, especially when the "answer" comes from those who wish to remove the political clause from the Industrial Workers of the World preamble. It does not follow that because a man, in possession of both his legs, walks steadily, *therefore* one of his legs being sawed off he will be able to keep from hobbling and falling. Reason dictates an opposite conclusion. The *discussion* is closed.—*Ed. The People.*]

EIGHTH LETTER

By G. F. SPETTEL

St. Paul, Minn.

In your answer to Arturo Giovannitti you say "Accordingly, the civilized revolutionary organization proclaims the Right, demands it, argues for it, and willingly submits to the civilized method of polling the votes. And it organizes itself with the requisite physical force in case its defeated adversary should resort to the barbarous way of enforcing his will."

Now my question is: How is the organization to know when its adversary is defeated? Is there any probability that the political machine that counts the votes will become good or terror-stricken, and honestly count the votes, and thereby proclaim the defeat of the idle class by the working class?

ANSWER.

[A political movement knows from a thousand and one sources whether its numerical forces are strong or weak. In this city, for instance, Hearst was elected Mayor two years ago. Everybody knows that. The reason he is not in the City Hall to-day is that he was not equipped with the physical force to enforce his victory. The counting out of Hearst deceived nobody.

The above answer is on the supposition that the political movement of Labor would triumph, and the Capitalist Class then attempt the trick played on Hearst. The chances are against such a contingency. The chances are as stated several weeks ago in the answer to Hoffman. Some capitalist outrage on the economic field will precipitate war. In that case the issue will depend upon the degree of integrally industrial organization that the proletariat may find itself in.

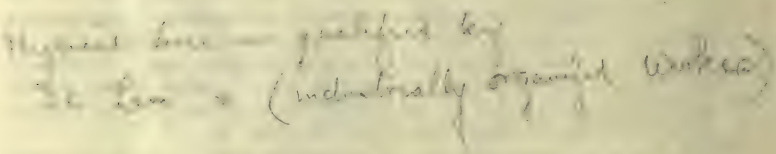
If they should find themselves in so weak a degree of integrally industrial organization as they now are in, or in a stronger one, yet not possessed of the minimum of strength needed for resistance, cohesion and attraction, then the armed force of the capitalist class will mop the earth with them. Then there will be born an "Underground America," as there has long been an "Underground Russia." The handful of revolutionists will be forced into surreptitious propaganda, and the Revolution will have to raise itself above ground by its own boot-straps.

If, however, the proletariat should, at such a time, find them-

selves organized to such a degree of integral industrialism (and the more strongly the better) that sufficient resistance could be offered to the capitalist, and sufficient attraction could be exercised upon the rest and not yet organized workers,—then the proletariat would mop the earth with the capitalist class. It would be able to do so because its industrial form of organization would not only furnish it the required physical force, but would also enable it forthwith to conduct production. But—

But that possibility, or eventuality, is out of all question if the industrial organization were to start upon the theory that there is *actual war now*. If it did, it would be throttled in short order. Only by recognizing the civilized method of peaceful trial of strength, implied in political action, will the proletariat be able to recruit the physical force (industrially organized workers) with the aid of which, under the first supposition, it will be in position to enforce its political triumph; or with the aid of which it may be able, under the second supposition, to meet successfully capital. brutality.

Thus, in either case, political action is as necessary as industrial organization is indispensable.—*Ed. The People.*]



NINTH LETTER

By O. EHERICH

Oakland, Cal.

Since the controversy as to politics has tapered down to this point, I feel constrained to ask the question of the Editor: "Have the workers in reality the choice left as to effective tactics?"

Granted the validity of the assertion by the Editor, that without open political agitation the working class movement will narrow down to conspiracy, is it not being driven that way by the tactics of the ruling class? And must not the ruled class adopt the same methods if it wishes to meet and vanquish the opponents? Was it any more or less than a "conspiracy" that the mine-owners resorted to in the war in Colorado? Did it not burst through the thin veneer of constitutionality and brag of it in words? Did not the men in Colorado express their political will in regards to an 8-hour law by a majority vote of 47,000, for a constitutional amendment? If all the laborers in that state had been organized in as sound and solid an organization as the W. F. M., could they not have borne the brunt of the battle without the political movement? Could an utterly irresponsible autocratic power in Russia have gone any further after the same amount of provocation? Could these things not happen in any other State than Colorado, after the late Supreme Court decision? Let us not deceive ourselves, but do we really live in a constitutional country or is it only an illusion? The powers in Colorado were only provoked to the extent of being compelled to employ three shifts of men instead of two, yet when they could not starve the men into submission, did they not play their last trump? Could they have done any worse in the face of an existing conspiracy on the part of the miners? Is it not a merit for the W. F. M. to have unmasked the law and order brigands by tearing the mummery of hypocrisy from the faces of the plutes and shown the working class with what kind of an enemy they must reckon? Is there a possibility of emancipation by peaceful methods after these experiences? Will not the ruling class provoke violence if the demands for better conditions of the workers threaten the profits of the former? Has the working class really a choice left as to tactics, or is not the manner of resistance determined by the method of oppression?

Fully realizing the importance of keeping the proletarians from indulging in a headlong reckless, unheedful rush, can the class-conscious workers be trusted enough to learn from past experiences and shape their course accordingly? Have we any choice?

ANSWER.

[Boiled down to their substance, the above questions proceed from the error of holding that *actual war* exists now. In last week's answer to Kopald the error was exposed. Eherich himself would recognize his error if he allowed his eyes a wider sweep of the horizon.

It is true that the capitalist class has violated the constitution in the instance of the Colorado men. But that is not evidence enough of the existence of actual war. The rest of us are doing what Haywood was kidnapped for, and yet we are at large. The kidnapping and other outrages had taken place, and yet the convention of the Industrial Workers of the World met and worked in peace, although the capitalists aimed at its destruction, and evidently had their agents there to do their bidding.

Of identical nature is the error implied in the question whether the workers should not "adopt the same methods" as the capitalists. In this, as in the instance just touched on above, Eherich just sees one thing, but overlooks other things that are necessary for a correct conclusion. Eherich correctly points out the barbaric methods resorted to by the capitalists. He overlooks another thing that these self-same capitalists resort to, and without which their barbaric methods would not work in the manner they do. That other thing that capitalists resort to is external homage to the ways of civilization, external homage to the Genius of the Age. He who says, the workers should adapt themselves to the methods of capitalism and cites their barbarism may not exclude their external homage to civilization. Adaptation in this instance would consist in a hypocritical posture towards political action, plus preparation of the means of barbarism. Adaptation, accordingly, would reject Eherich's suggested repudiation of political action. The bona fide Movement of Labor may not "adopt" the methods of the capitalist class in the class war. The Labor Movement must, on the contrary, place itself upon the highest plane civilization has reached. It must insist upon the enforcement of civilized methods, and it must do so in the way that civilized man does. Civilized man acts equipped with experience. Experience teaches that Right is a toy unless backed by Might; experience teaches also that the capitalist class is a brigand class bearing the mask of civilization, and that it is helped in the cheat by the undoubted circumstance that it has been a promoter of civilization. Equipped with this experience and knowledge, the civilized man will take up political action as the only means that, theoretically, promises a peaceful trial of strength; and he will simultaneously organize the integrally industrial union as the only available and the all-sufficient Might to enforce the Right that his ballot proclaims.

As to the question, whether or not the capitalist does not now "conspire" and "act in secret," and whether the worker should

not adopt that method also—that question, partly answered above, deserves special treatment. *No; secrecy is the bane of the union generally; it would be the destruction of the revolutionary union!* The Mahoneys and Shermans wanted secrecy. The widest publicity is essential to safety. Secrecy leaves the majorities in the Unions in ignorance of what happens at Union meetings; secrecy promotes the trade of the police spy, the "agents provocateurs," those raw-boned "anti-political revolutionists," like McParland, in the pay of the capitalist politicians. Left in ignorance of what happens in the Union, the majority of the membership is ever dependent upon private information; the informant may be honorable, he may also be dishonorable; the revolution must not be exposed to trip upon misinformation. On the other hand, the "agent provocateur" will find his occupation gone if publicity is enforced; the blood and thunder ranter, knowing *his* words would be published as coming from *him* will love his neck too well to indulge in crime-promoting declamation. Secrecy is *death;* publicity, *life.*

Has the Movement any choice? Certainly it has.—*Ed. The People.*]

TENTH LETTER
By JULIUS KIEFE
Cincinnati, O.

The S. L. P. members of the Industrial Workers of the World always claimed, that political (parliamentary) action is an absolute fluke: except, if it is backed up by economic organization on the lines of the Industrial Workers of the World. They also tell us in word and print, that people, believing in the economic organization to be the sole factor, by using the general strike tactics are just as wrong in their theory as the Socialists from the Socialist party who are of the opinion that the ballot only will bring them economic and political liberty. Another argument we hear at present quite often and that is: How could we (non-parliamentary Socialists) organize the workers on general strike tactics without being jailed or hanged at present? Indeed very easy to answer. We tell the working class that the Industrial Workers of the World (and that is the reason we belong to it) is a revolutionary economic organization, whose ultimate object will be to free the workers, who are robbed under the capitalist system of exploitation in the production of wealth by not owning the necessary tools to produce commodities for themselves. For this reason the Industrial Workers of the World was organized and not like pure and simple unions a la American Federation of Labor to get for the workers an increase in wages and possibly a shortening of hours.—If the capitalist class fears this proposition so much, that it would not tolerate such an organization, because it trains its members for the Social Revolution, how is it, that it allows a political party such as the S. L. P. or even S. P. to make propaganda for Socialism? In my opinion this looks very funny indeed, or is it perhaps that the capitalist attorneys and the leaders of the different parliamentary Socialist parties have some kind of an agreement to blind the workers if you please, when the day of the social revolution arrives and is declared by the working class themselves by refusing to work any longer for the capitalist parasites? In fact Mr. Iglesias of Spain and also Mr. Vandervelde of Belgium, two of the prominent members of the international political Socialist parties blinded the workers of their respective countries, when they were in conflict several years ago, while the social general strike was tested there. (This information I received by reading a leaflet on the general strike by Walter Arnold about a year ago.) As far as the preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World in regards to organizing the workers on the political as well as on the economic field is at least said confusing and should be changed at our next convention to read: The workers should be organized on the economic field to overthrow the economic and the political state of capitalism.

ANSWER.

[Upon a more careful reading of the above the impression that it asked some questions was found to be false. Had a first glance at the communication conveyed the correct impression, it would have been excluded by last week's decision to close the discussion. Kiefe's contribution not only evades the question repeatedly put by The People to the total opposers of political action, but it is cast in an unhappy controversial mold, unhappy because in not a single instance are its premises correct, the whole thing reveals a woeful confusion of facts and rashness in arriving at a conclusion. The promise of an answer having been made last week, the promise will be kept.

When ten years hence—'tis to be hoped sooner—Kiefe, a member of last year's Industrial Workers of the World convention may happen to read his above argument, he will feel quite charitable toward those workers, who, notwithstanding they have frequently heard his arguments against the American Federation of Labor and the capitalist class in general, still keep coming back with retorts that prove they still are muddled, still remain tangled in previous misconceptions, still continue stuffed with prejudices, and still have failed to learn the lesson that reckless accusation can only work against the unification of the working class.

If Kiefe can still use the term "parliamentary" action as identical with "political" action in this discussion; if he can still venture to insist that, without political action so as to recognize the civilized method of peaceful trial of strength, the *working class* (not a handful of men behind closed and barred doors) can organize itself for the revolution, and to insist by simply insisting; if he still does not see the difference between the power that a political body, (a body recognizing the peaceful method of trial of strength) enjoys, by the mere fact of its civilized posture, to force the capitalist class to draw in its horns against it, and the contrary power which a body, that preaches physical force only, does, by the mere fact of its own uncivilized posture, suicidally exert to furnish that same capitalist class a welcome excuse to draw out and sharpen its horns against it; if he still does not see that, and can only consider "funny" the arguments of those who do see, explain, and declare the difference; if he still is so confused on the subject at issue that he perceives not the radical difference between a "strike" and a "general strike;" if he still is so reckless as to repeat, wholly without verification of the charge, such slander against the integrity of Iglesias and Vandervelde, as he hurls at them and insinuates indiscriminately against all other Socialist political parties, is satisfied with merely stating the source from which he borrows his slanderous conclusion, is ready to appear as a swallower of the untested charge of somebody else, and ventures to make such a sequence the basis of his stand;—if notwithstanding his contribu-

tion is dated as late as February 7, months after the discussion started, and enjoying better opportunities than the average worker, whom he addresses in behalf of the Industrial Workers of the World, Kiefe himself is found guilty of their foibles, himself comes back with retorts that prove he still is muddled, still remains tangled in previous misconceptions, still continues stuffed with prejudices, and still has failed to learn the lesson that reckless accusation unaccompanied with even a vestige of evidence, can only work against the unification of the working class—if this is thus, Kiefe should not despair of the "dullards."

Taking up Kiefe's statements seriatim we shall rapidly run through them.

"Parliamentary" action is not "political" action. Without "political action," true enough, there could be no "parliamentary" action. But the latter need not follow the former. For instance. There was a campaigning and election for delegates to last year's convention of the Industrial Workers of the World. Some of the delegates tried to parliamentarize at the convention. Those were the ones who favored compromise with treason and corruption. The revolutionists refused to "parliamentarize." They stood to their guns. They neither compromised nor bolted, and they triumphed.

Superfluous to heap up further proof that a body that organizes for war only can expect to remain unbattered by the capitalist, from above, or unscuttled by the MacParland "agents provocateurs," or their kindred the Dumases and Petriellas, from below. The style of argument adopted by the woman who *insisted* against her husband that a knife was a pair of scissors, and who, when finally ducked under water, stuck out her arm, and with her fingers made the motion of scissors, will not stead in the discussions of the labor movement—least of all by folks who evade a direct answer to a pointed, legitimate and fair question.

If the ballot, an acquisition of civilization for peaceful trial of strength, is a concession from the capitalist class, then all other conquests of civilization are concessions, *the right to organize economically, included.* If it is "funny" to utilize the concession of political action; it must be side-splitting for any inflexible non-accepter of concessions to start Unions. Consequently, if "funny" is the claim that the capitalist class should "allow a political party such as the S. L. P." but will not tolerate an organization that repudiates the civilized method of trial of strength, if that claim is "funny," then roars-provoking must be the hint that the S. L. P. and all Socialist political bodies indiscriminately are in the pay of the capitalist class.

The organizing for the ordinary strike is no social act; the organizing for the general uprising of the working class is an act of high social significance. The latter is a political act in that its purpose is the remodeling of society. Consequently, though "physical force," after a fashion, rather than the "ballot," is the means

for the trial of strength in ordinary strikes, civilization does not condemn the Union that organizes for such "physical" demonstration. In the instance of the so-called "general strike" (a most infelicitous and contradictory term in the mouths of those who mean the dispossession of the capitalist class) the union that organizes for that to the tune of "down with political action!" would to-day, in America, tactlessly and uselessly bring down upon itself the condemnation of civilization.

Walter Arnold libeled Iglesias and Vandervelde. As to the latter, The People has more than once expressed its opposition to his methods. To suspect his integrity, however one may suspect his judgment, is gratuitous insult. As to Iglesias, the gratuitousness of the insult is still crasser. Spanish conditions are among the most backward. Difficult is there the part of the revolutionist. So difficult that suffering has bred unreasoning rage in many heads and breasts. Not even of these would it be fair to say they "blinded the workers" by "some kind of agreement," although they have more than once led the workers to useless slaughter—and then themselves escaped over the mountains into France, or over the water to Italy. The charge that Iglesias "blinded the workers" by "some kind of agreement" is an unqualified libel.—*Ed. The People.*]

ELEVENTH LETTER
By CHARLES RICE
New York

The controversial columns "As to Politics" have proved intensely interesting and suggestive even to workers outside of the ranks of the Socialist Labor Party or the Industrial Workers of the World. Quite a notable element, ever growing numerically, of the Socialist party men, members as well as non-members (the writer among them) are on the point of turning a new leaf in Socialist theory and tactics. Many of us are disgusted with the untenable, double-faced hobnobbing of the Socialist party organizations and its prominents (a la Hanford, Hoehn, etc.), with the A. F. of L., not to speak of campaigning methods frequently resorted to by the Socialist party in different States that nauseate by their stench of Rep-Dem vote-catching. We are now taking stock of our traditional parliamentarian Socialism and are looking around us for new light.

I am confident that I voice the sense of a great number of Socialist party members and sympathizers in propounding the following questions for our especial benefit:

I.

What is the exact position of the Daily People on the question of so-called political action in connection with a class-conscious labor consolidation of the Industrial Workers of the World type? So far, unfortunately, we have not been able to cull from the columns of The People a *definite* and *exhaustive* exposition of The People's attitude on this head, an exposition *definite* as to the terms involved (e. g. "political action") and as to practical steps to carry out that attitude. Let the Editor take the trouble to give an exhaustive statement of all that his position implies, taking care to *define* preliminarily *every doubtful,* or involved, or ambiguous term or expression, and assuming nothing for granted until he has covered *this* part of his work (i. e. definition) and he will have cleared the way for a much more effective and beneficial discussion of this question of the utmost importance to all wage slaves.

II.

Is the position taken by the Daily People on this question identical with that of the S. L. P. itself?

III.

This query is put here simply as a hint to the Editor to take account of it in formulating his answer to the first query, as the answer to the third is necessarily involved in the answer to the

first. The platform of the S. L. P. states that "The time is fast coming when, in the *natural course of social evolution* (italics are mine), this (capitalist) system, through the destructive action of its failures and crises, on the one hand, and the constructive tendencies of its trusts and other capitalist combinations, on the other hand, will have worked out its own downfall," and "We, therefore, call upon the wage workers of America to organize under the banner of the Socialist Labor Party into a class-conscious body, aware of its rights and determined to conquer them."

In view of this, the following queries under this head are legitimate:

(a) *What* is there to conquer and from *whom* to conquer, if this system will *naturally* work out its own downfall?

(b) If some conquering has to be done, who will do it—the Socialist Labor Party or the Industrial Workers of the World (through a political organization of its own)?

(c) What shall we, in quest of new and certain light in our sea of doubts, meanwhile do? Shall we join the S. L. P., help build it up, get ourselves drilled for the final "conquering" and then disband and walk over to the political organization that the Industrial Workers of the World will have by that time evolved?

(d) Will the Industrial Workers of the World at all be likely to evolve such an organization if we persist in building up the S. L. P.? If we are to join the Industrial Workers of the World and to try to steer its course away from politics, that is from indorsing any existing Socialist political organization, and at the same time band ourselves outside as a body of staunch S. L. P.-ites, then where will our Industrial Workers of the World political expression through an organization of its own come in?

(e) Shall we not join the S. L. P., but stay in the S. P. and try to do what we can to counteract the semi-bourgeois tendencies and dubious methods of the Bergers, Wilshires, and their ilk, and wait till the Industrial Workers of the World *will* work out its own political machinery for "taking" and afterwards "holding" the means of wealth-production and distribution, as we will have to at any rate; to disband, to strip ourselves of our S. L. P. or S. P. garments in order to don the full revolutionary dress suit of the Industrial Workers of the World?

ANSWER.

[Answer to I.—A rapid sketch of the social evolution that underlies the word "political" may aid in understanding the different shades of meaning that the word conveys.

Genesis 2:24, proclaims this maxim: "therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife;"

the same Genesis 3:16, proclaims this other maxim: "and thy desire shall be unto thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

The two maxims are obviously contradictory. They can not stand abreast of each other. They were not reflected by the same, they were reflected by different social stages. The first was reflected by an earlier, the second by a later social stage. At the earlier social stage a male of one gens marrying a female of another gens (marriage was not allowed within the same gens) went over to and was absorbed by his wife's gens; at the later social stage it was the wife who left her own and passed over into her husband's gens. At the earlier social stage inheritance was in the female line; at the later social stage it was in the male line. At the earlier social stage property was communal, at the later social stage it became private. Hand in hand with these changes went a series of institutional changes. "Government," "administration," or whatever name may be given that central guidance found indispensable in organization, was revolutionized. The original system, under which "government" rested upon the *people,* not upon *territory,* was reversed. "Government" resting upon *territory,* not upon the *people,* reached the latter only through the former, only as they came within the territorial property demarkation. This change of institutional "government" was in keeping with the change that property had undergone. Natural enough the institutional change culminated in the building of cities and the establishment of class-rule. The word "political" has its root in the Greek word for *city.* For fuller information read Lewis H. Morgan's "Ancient Society." It furnishes the ethnic ground-work for Socialism, and at the same time sheds light upon terminology.

Obedient to its origin the word "political" has more than one application.

The word occurs, for instance, in the Socialist maxim: "The 'political' concept dominates the economic aspirations of a Union; hence no Union is worth the name whose economic aspirations are not dominated by Socialist thought." Slovenly users of words have misconceived the meaning of the word "political" in the maxim; self-misled, they have come to cite the maxim as follows: "The political organization must dominate the economic organization." This is nonsense. Political organization neither does nor can dominate economic organization. Such a notion is at war with the Morgan-Marxian materialist conception of history and the error leads to grave false steps in tactics. The word "political" in the maxim, as correctly quoted, means the conception that a Union may have regarding the social structure. A Union whose conception of society is capitalistic will find its economic aspirations dominated accordingly. Ignorant of the wage slave nature of its membership, it will seek to deal with the employers as peers. At first blush this view also may be considered at war with the Morgan-Marxian principle of the material basis of thought. There is no

contradiction. It is a fact, insisted upon by these scientists, that thought lingers behind newly formed and forming material bases. Indisputable is the fact that most of the economic efforts on the part of workingmen to-day—despite their material conditions, which no longer furnish a basis for "conservatism"—are conservative. The circumstance is only additional argument why such efforts are fatedly ineffective. On the other hand, a Union whose conception of society enlightens it on the wage slave status of its membership, together with the rest that thereby hangs, such a Union will not circumscribe itself to conservative aspirations. There is no economic organization without a "political" concept, consciously or unconsciously. The word "political" in that connection has no reference to voting. It simply means conception appertaining to social structure. In identical sense, the word "political" recurs in the term "political economy."

The word "political" occurs also in the expressions "political government," or the "political State," etc. In these connections the word "political" is the equivalent of "class rule." "Political government" means class rule government. The social theory of Anarchy (the term is used in its strictly technical sense, as given by Anarchists themselves) presupposes government to be identical with class rule, or despotism. The theory is based upon a myth. It is not the myths of the Bible only that ethnology overthrows. It also overthrows the myths of Anarchy. Man appears on the stage of traceable or inferable history in organized society, and with government. Government was then wholly compatible with freedom. (See the address Reform or Revolution, pp. 6-9.) The social evolution and revolutions that culminated in the overthrow of the mother-right, the rise of private property, inheritance in the male line and territorial institutions, divided society into economic classes; government lost its former character of a function in co-operation, it became a means of oppression by property-holders. The building of cities being the culmination of the external development, government became "political." This "political government" means "class rule government," the "political State" means a social order reared upon the class system.

Finally a third order of connection, in which the word "political" recurs, appears in the term "political action." Here "political" means neither "appertaining to social structure," nor "class rule." At the International Socialist Congress of Zurich, 1893, Landauer, an Anarchist of the bomb-throwing variety, demanded admission on the ground that the blowing up of capitalists was also "political action." He used the word "political" in the first of the two senses just considered. He was denied admission, and the delegate of the Socialist Labor Party contributed his vote towards the motion that kept Landauer out, and preserved for the term the technically historic meaning it had acquired. "Political action" is a purely technical expression. It means the peaceful trial of

strength in social issues. As such, the term is generic. It embraces a number of things, that is, all the things necessary for its realization. It embraces primaries; conventions, or any other established method for the nomination of candidates for office in the "political," that is, the "class rule" government; campaigning, that is, agitation in favor of the principles and, of course candidates, of the party: voting (not private voting) but voting in the same place where the opponents vote; finally as a consequence, "parliamentary activity."

None of these details of "political action" has a doubtful or double meaning, except the last—"parliamentary activity."

Parliamentary activity is of two natures. One style of parliamentary activity takes place between opponents who have a common ground to stand upon. That sort of parliamentary activity is marked by "log-rolling," or "compromise." It is the parliamentary activity of free traders with protectionists, gold standard with silver standard men, pro and anti-Trust people—in short, elements who stand upon the common ground of the capitalist system. Another sort of parliamentary activity is that observed between opponents who have no common ground to stand upon. Such parliamentary activity is the only one permissible to the representatives of a party of Socialism in the parliament of a country, such as America, where feudalism is tracelessly abolished, and the two classes—Capitalist and Proletarian—face each other. Such parliamentary activity does not tolerate "log-rolling." Such parliamentary activity, wherever obtainable, is, to a great extent, the continuation, upon the much more widely heard forum of parliament, of the agitation and education conducted by such a party on the forum of the stump during the campaign. Such parliamentary activity preaches and demands the revolution—the surrender of the capitalist class. Anything short of such activity by the elected candidates of a party of Socialism is "log-rolling;" "log-rolling" implies a common ground between the "log-rollers;" consequently the "log-rolling" Socialist must have shifted his ground to that of his capitalist opponent. Such a Socialist betrays the Working Class. (See Flashlights of Amsterdam Congress, Addendum M., Review of the Dresden Convention, pp. 124-127.) A branch of what may be called "parliamentary activity" is the activity in executive offices. There also the principle above laid down is enforcible. Socialist incumbents may act only obedient to the principle that impossible is the attempt to represent two classes engaged in the conflict of the class war; that, consequently, they represent only one class—the Working Class.

Summing up "political action" by the revolutionary Working Class, the action means the endeavor to settle, by the peaceful method of trial of strength, the issue between the Working Class and the Capitalist Class. That issue demands the overthrow of the capitalist regimen, implies the razing to the ground of that peculiar

structure of government that arose with the rising of cities from which it took its name—*political* government, class rule government. The overthrow of the capitalist regimen, in turn, means the restoration of administrative co-operation in production (see Address on the Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World, pp. 29-47).

Answer to II.—The discussion "As to Politics" started more than three months ago—Daily People, November 23, 1906. It was started with a letter from John Sandgren, California, a non-Party man, opposing political action and proposing that the S. L. P., and the S. P., both "break up camp." The same issue of The People contained The People's answer. The principles, set up in that answer, are the principles that have been upheld throughout these more than three months.

That whatever member the S. L. P. may happen to put in charge of the editorial management of the Party's English organ may fail to voice the Party's views on this, or any other vital question that may spring up, is quite imaginable. *Un*-imaginable is that state of things under which such an S. L. P. Editor would not have been ousted long ago. The Party's constitution, together with the strict discipline that it enforces, would have suspended the Editor of The People within 48 hours after his first misstatement of the Party's position; and long before the discussion would have lasted three months and more, he would have been removed.

In view of this fact; in view of the further fact that not the slightest evidence of dissatisfaction has manifested itself on the part of the Party, but quite the reverse; the conclusion is justified that the position taken by The People in this question is the position of the S. L. P.

The word "identical" is here avoided because it is unnecessarily sweeping, although there is nothing to indicate that it would not be justified, and everything to warrant the belief that the word would fit the situation.

Answer to III, (a)—What is there to conquer?—Economic freedom, which involves all other freedoms.

From whom?—From the ruling class.

It does not follow that, because the *capitalist* system works out its own downfall, therefore class rule will have ceased.

It may be a question whether we are now under the capitalist system proper. Much may be said on the side of the theory that, if we are not yet under a different system, we are fast tending towards it. The downfall of capitalism from the causes indicated in the S. L. P. platform, is by no means equivalent with the uprise of the Socialist Republic. Readers of The People are recommended to read the booklet "Two Pages from Roman History," especially the first of the "Two Pages" in the latter third of which this very subject is handled in detail. The country is now moving into a social system to which the name "Capitalism," in its proper sense, is applying less and less. A monopoly period is now surging

upward to which the designation "Plutocratic Feudalism" is the fitter term. It does not follow that, if the very Few are gathered on one side, and very Many are lumped on the other, the latter will necessarily swamp the former. They will do so only when they shall have understood their own revolutionary mission, and organized accordingly. Contrariwise—let the Working Class continue a sufficiently longer spell befuddled by the labor-lieutenants of the Capitalist Class; confused by the clatter of pure and simple political Socialists on the one side, and the shrieks of pure and simple Physical Forcists, on the other; periodically swamped by the floods of misinformation with regard to things and men; and perpetually the victims of such sinister characters as the "Man of the Furred Cap" in Eugene Sue's master story "The Iron Trevet"; and let those within or in the suburbs of the Movement who are neither labor-lieutenants of the Capitalist Class, nor pure and simple politicians, nor pure and simple clubbists, nor spreaders of false information, nor yet "Men of the Furred Cap," persist in the apathetic course of philosophically standing by and looking on, and fatuously expect to see things straighten up, instead of contributing emphatic share towards order—then, whatever periods of senseless (senseless because un-revolutionary and, therefore merely riotous) upheavals may betide, the Many will sink to the depths of serfs, actual serfs of a plutocratic feudal glebe.

There will be everything to conquer—and from whom to conquer it.

Answer to III, (b)—Proceeding from the belief that the conquering will be done without the country having first to go through the ordeal of Plutocratic Feudalism—proceeding from that belief, the conquering will be done by the Industrial Workers of the World, assisted, step by step, by a political party that blazons the Revolution; assisted, accordingly, by a body that expresses, in the only practical manner known, the civilized sentiment of the Industrial Workers of the World to seek a peaceful trial of strength.

What the name of that political party will be it is now too early to know. What the leading characteristics of that Party will be—*that* is knowable to-day. That political Party must demand the unconditional surrender of the Capitalist Class; that Party must be aware of the fact, and its every act must be in accord thereto, that the necessary evolution, which has to precede the evolutionary crisis known as "revolution," has already taken place in the womb of society in the shape of development and concentration of the means of production; consequently, that all talk about "evolution" as an excuse for bourgeois improvements, or "one thing at a time," is born either of hopeless stupidity, or of designing corruption, or of a constitutional poltroonery, from any one of which the Revolution can only expect betrayal at the critical moment; that Party must be *one* thing only to all men, *one* thing in all latitudes and longitudes of the land—no perfidy to principle

under the guise of "autonomy;" that Party must have room within its camp for all the desirable social elements whose occupation excludes them from bona fide membership in the Industrial Workers of the World, and who attest their desirability, in point of sentiment and intellect, by standing unswervingly upon the class interests of the Working Class, and gladly submitting to the discipline such a Party requires; last, not least, and fundamentally to the above four features, that Party must recognize that the economic organization can no more be subject for "Neutral" treatment than the crew of a ship can be subject for "Neutral" treatment by the ship itself; that the Union, industrially organized and revolutionarily animated, is the embryo of future society, the sole constituency of the Congress of the future, the fated supplanter of "political government," hence the only available, and, withal, the all-sufficient physical power to enforce the Party's program.

The only Party that to-day promotes the Industrial Workers of the World program is the Socialist Labor Party. How things will shape themselves—whether the clear-headed and upright elements in the Socialist party will be able to attain control of and cleanse their own party and in that case whether that cleansed party will merge in the S. L. P., or, jointly with it, perfect a new party, under a new name; or whether those clear-headed and upright elements in the S. P. will fail within their own party, be absorbed in the S. L. P., and they, who alone impart whatever fiber and respect the S. P. to-day possesses and enjoys, having withdrawn and the old S. P. having inevitably collapsed in consequence, the Industrial Workers of the World will accept the S. L. P. or the newly-organized Party as its political reflex; or, as a third hypothesis, whether in any event the Industrial Workers of the World will prefer to cast its own political reflex, disentangled from all annoying reminiscences of past political conflicts—"all that, forsooth, rests on the knees of the gods."

Answer to III, (c) and (e)—These two questions are too interdependent for separate treatment.

Since the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World, Fellow Worker Eugene V. Debs wrote a number of articles on the merits of the new organization, and the wrongfulness of the hostile posture held towards it by men of his own party, the S. P. Among these articles, two—the one originally published in the "Miner's Magazine," October 25, 1905, and the other published in "The Worker," July 28, 1906 both of which were reproduced in The People—are especially to the point. Debs ridiculed with pungent satire the "peculiar logic" that led those S. P. men to set up the theory of "boring from within" the American Federation of Labor and expect success, notwithstanding they justly reject the idea of "boring from within" the Democratic and Republican parties; and he correctly stigmatized association with the American Federation of Labor as "contamination." Debs was left unan-

swered. The only retort that would have turned the edge of the points he made—that retort the A-F-of-L-first-S-P-next men who dominate the S. P. did not dare to come out with. That retort was: "If you consider 'peculiar' the logic of expecting success from 'boring from within' the American Federation of Labor, and are of the conviction that association with the American Federation of Labor is 'contamination,' by what process of reason are you expecting success from 'boring from within' the S. P.?"

This retort embodies the answer to III, (c) and (e).

An organization is a structure. A steamer constructed for an excursion boat can not be transformed into a battle ship. No amount of pruning, nursing and grafting will turn a sour apple tree into a tree that will bear oranges. The S. P. was not a scheme—though schemers may have joined it, and did. It arose obedient to a principle—the wrong principle that political action is all-sufficient, the obverse of which is the denial of the essential function of the Union in the achievement of the Social Revolution. Such a political structure cannot be "bored from within." The nuisance can be abated only by its own decay—which has visibly set in. The joining of, or staying in it by fresh and sound elements could have for its effect only to retard the politico-geologic and atmospheric conditions that doom the false political structure to decline and fall.

Otherwise with regard to the S. L. P. Whatever defects there may be in the Party, these defects can only be of secondary nature. They are not structural. On the fundamental issue of Unionism the Party is sound to the core. Those who would not waste their efforts should join it. By doing so, not only will they not retard, they would promote the politico-geologic and atmospheric conditions that will ripen the well rounded, full-orbed revolutionary movement.

Should the third of the three hypotheses, considered under Answer III, (b), come to pass, then, as stated in the answer to the first Sandgren letter in this discussion, "the S. L. P. will 'break up camp' with a shout of joy if a body merging into its own ideal can be said to 'break up camp.'"

Answer to III, (d)—The bulk of the answer under this head has been given under the heads of the answers to III, (b), (c) and (e)—at least indirectly.

More than once has the remark been heard that it was unfortunate for the normal growth and development of the Industrial Workers of the World that there were two rival parties of Socialism in the field. Quite possibly Sandgren's position has its roots in that experience. To the obvious fact of the retarding effect upon the Industrial Workers of the World of the rivalry of these two parties probably is due his wish that they both "break up camp;" and probably hence, and not due to any conscious objection to

political action, he has unwittingly flown to the extreme of the theoretical rejection of political action altogether.

However this may be, vain are all tears over facts. The only wise thing to do is to see the facts squarely in the face.

The two rival parties are in existence. Their rivalry proceeds from different conceptions regarding the function of the Union, and, inferentially, regarding the function of political action. The conception of the one, the S. L. P., tallies with that of the Industrial Workers of the World; the conception of the other, the S. P., is at variance with that of the Industrial Workers of the World. Inevitable was the experience that members of both parties should find themselves in the Industrial Workers of the World—members of the Socialist Labor Party, graduates from the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, entering the Industrial Workers of the World as ducks do a mill-pond; and members of the S. P., segregating into that party's component elements; one element, like ducks that had been hatched out by hens, fraternizing on and in their common other element, like hens who had hatched out ducks, cackling and fluttering and scolding, incensed at a thing that is contrary to their nature.

A comprehensive grasp of all these facts, and these confronting conditions, dictates the conclusion that the growth and full-orbed development of the Industrial Workers of the World could only be benefited, indeed, will be mightily subserved, by multiplying the "ducks" for the Industrial Workers of the World pond. Ducks are more naturally hatched by their kind: henneries are less safe. The S. L. P. is to-day the hatchery of revolutionists, and of the propagandists of the aims and methods of the revolution. Wisdom may be relied upon, in the fullness of time, to dictate the Industrial Workers of the World's political expression—an expression that will materialize under one or other of the three hypotheses advanced under Answer to III, (b).—*Ed. The People.*]

SUPPLEMENTARY

Since the closing of the discussion "As to Politics" was announced in these columns a correspondent, who prefers not to have his name published, sent in this question:

"I'm no 'pure and simple political Socialist,' as you will see; and I am no 'pure and simple physical forcist,' as you will also see. I believe with you that political action is necessary. The Labor Movement may not step down from the plane of civilized methods. If it did, none would be better suited than our capitalist masters. I hope I've set myself clear on that score. I also believe with you that the ballot is just so much paper thrown away, without the physical force to back it up, or, as you have neatly said, 'to enforce the Right that the ballot proclaims.' I've set myself clear on that score also, I hope.

"Now, what I want to know is this: Does it follow, as you seem to think, that we must have the Industrial Workers of the World, I mean an industrial Union, to supplement the ballot? I think not. I think we should concentrate our efforts, instead of dividing them. Why should we divide our efforts, and our money, and our time between a political and an economic organization? I'll watch the Letter Box."

The answer merits more thorough than off-hand treatment in the Letter Box. Both the question and the answer will fitly supplement the discussion which closes in this issue with the answers to Rice's questions.

What our correspondent desires is to avoid a division of energy. A wise desire. Does his plan answer his desire? Evidently he fails to see that it does not. The only interpretation his plan admits of is the organizing of a military, of an armed force to back up the revolutionary ballot. The division of energy is not avoided. It is only transferred to an armed, instead of to an economic organization.

Seeing that, in either case, the evil of divided energies is incurred, and cannot be escaped, the question resolves itself into this—which of the two organizations is it preferable to divide energies with, the economic or the military?

A military organization implies no one, or two, it implies a number of things. Bombs, explosives, generally, may be left out of the reckoning. They may be of incidental, but not of exclusive use by an organized force.

First of all powder is needed. The best of powder needs bullets and balls to do the business. The best of powder, bullets and balls are useless without guns. Nor are inferior guns of much

avail when pitted against the up-to-date guns at the command of the capitalist class. The military organization of the revolutionary proletariat will need the most effective weapons. The question has often been asked from capitalist sources, Where will you get the money from to buy the railroads and the other capitalist plants? The question is silly. No one proposes, nor will there be any occasion, to "buy" those things. Not silly, however, but extremely pertinent, is the question, Where will the proletariat get the billions needed to purchase such a military equipment?

Supose the billions be forthcoming. Weapons, in the hands of men unskilled in their use, are dangerous, primarily, to those who hold them. Numbers, undrilled in military evolutions, only stand in one another's way. Where and how could these numbers practice in the use of their arms, and in the military drill? Where and how could they do the two things in secret? In public, of course, it would be out of question.

Suppose finally, that the problem of the billions were solved, and the still more insuperable problem of exercise and drill be overcome. *Suppose* the military organization of the proletariat took the field and triumphed. And then—it would immediately have to dissolve. Not only will it not have been able to afford the incidental protection that the revolutionary Union could afford to the proletariat while getting ready, but all its implements, all the money that it did cost, all the tricks it will have learned, and the time consumed in learning them, will be absolutely lost. Its swords will have to be turned into pruning hooks, its guns into ploughshares; its knowledge to be unlearned.

How would things stand with the integrally organized Industrial Union?

First, its cost is trifling, positively within reach;

Secondly, every scrap of information it gathers while organizing, is of permanent value;

Thirdly, it will be able to offer resistance to capitalist encroachments, and thereby to act as a breast-work for its members, while getting ready;

Fourthly, and most significant and determining of all, the day of its triumph will be the beginning of the full exercise of its functions—the administration of the productive forces of the Nation.

The fourth consideration is significant and determining. It is the consideration that Social Evolution points the finger to, dictating the course that the proletariat must take;—dictating its goal;—dictating its methods;—dictating its *means*. The proletariat, whose economic badge is poverty; the proletariat, whose badge, the first of all revolutionary classes, is economic impotence;—for the benefit of that class, apparently treated so stepmotherly by Social Evolution, Social Evolution has wrought as it has wrought for none other. It has builded the smithy of capitalist Industrial

concentration; and, in keeping with the lofty mission of the Working Class to abolish class rule on earth, Social Evolution has gathered ready for the fashioning, not the implements of destruction, but the implements of future peace, withal the most potent weapon to clear the field of the capitalist despot—the *industrially ranked* toilers. The integrally organized Industrial Union is the weapon that Social Evolution places within the grasp of the proletariat as the means for their emancipation.

Division of energy being unavoidable, can there be any doubt what organization should divide the energies of the proletariat with their political organization—the military or the Industrial?

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OF THE

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OF THE WORLD

An Address Delivered at Minneapolis, Minn.

By DANIEL DE LEON

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